FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

Daily Report

Near East & South Asia

FBIS-NES-96-001
Tuesday
2 January 1996

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Daily Report
Near East & South Asia

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Yemeni-Eritrean Conflict

Agreement in Principle Reached To Demilitarize Islands

NC2912125995 Paris AFP in English 1254 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Asmara, Dec 29 (AFP)—The Yemeni and Eritrean presidents have agreed in principle to demilitarise the disputed Hanish archipelago which guards access to strategic Red Sea shipping lanes, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zinawi said Friday [29 December].

200 Freed Yemeni Soldiers Arrive in Sanaa

NC3012164295 Paris AFP in English 1614 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanaa, Dec 30 (AFP) — All 200 Yemeni soldiers captured by Eritrea in fighting over a disputed Red Sea island arrived here Saturday [30 December] after being released by the Asmara authorities, the official news agency SABA said.

"Members of the military garrison who were deployed on Hanish al-Kabir have arrived at Sanaa airport on board a plane chartered by the International Committee of the Red Cross," the agency said.

An Asmara-Sanaa shuttle brought back the prisoners, who included 47 army officers and 18 civilians, in two flights on Saturday.

They were captured when Eritrean forces seized the island of Hanish al-Kabir (Greater Hanish) on December 18 in a three-day battle in which nine soldiers died.

Ethiopia's Zenawi: No Final Solution to Dispute

NC2912145595 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1410 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Sanaa, 29 Dec (MENA)—Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has said that his country will continue to try to resolve the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict peacefully. He noted that efforts have not yet yielded a comprehensive solution to the problem, but he viewed the mediation attempts as positive and encouraging. There is great hope that a solution will be reached, he said.

In statements before leaving Sanaa today, Zenawi described his talks with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih as extremely encouraging and giving great hope that the dispute will be resolved.

Asked about the latest statements by Eritrean President Asayas Afewerki, in which he described the Ethiopian mediation as merely a diplomatic activity, Zenawi said he had deep conviction that the problem cannot be solved except through negotiations and peaceful methods. He added that Yemen and Eritrea are two fraternal countries and nothing can force them to enter into a conflict.

Asked to evaluate the Ethiopian initiative's chance of success, Zenawi said: If we go into details, there are some differences. But peaceful methods should be the only option to solve the problem.

Yemeni Spokesman Denies Ethiopian Mediator's Statement

EA3112165995 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Yemen has once again welcomed peaceful options to resolve its dispute with Eritrea over the Hanish islands in the Red Sea, but only after Eritrea abandons greater Hanish, which it occupied on 18 December.

A Yemeni official spokesman has denied what the Ethiopian prime minister, Meles Zenawi, said in a statement to the effect that Sanaa had agreed to pull its weapons out of the Yemeni islands. The spokesman said his country had from the beginning welcomed Ethiopia's mediation, while adhering to its right to remove the aftermath of the Eritrean aggression against the sovereignty of Yemen over greater Hanish island. The spokesman added that Yemen would welcome talks and arbitration or going to the International Court of Justice in The Hague in order to determine the maritime border of the two countries in accordance with international laws and conventions but only after the withdrawal of the aggressive Eritrean forces from the island.

UN's Butrus-Ghali in Yemen on Mediation Effort Discusses Dispute With Salih

JN3012134895 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother President Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih today received UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali, who is currently visiting our country. They discussed bilateral relations and ways of promoting cooperation between our country and the United Nations and its various organizations. Discussions dealt with developments of the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island and the role that the UN secretary general can play in exerting good offices to bring views closer and resolve differences between our country and Eritrea on the maritime borders in accordance with international law.

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The brother president welcomed the UN secretary general's visit to our country. He praised the level of cooperation between our country and the United Nations. The brother president reviewed developments of the dispute between our country and Eritrea [words indistinct]. He said that our country welcomed all the mediations and good offices that have been made by sisterly and friendly states to [words indistinct], proceeding from our country's honest desire to resolve the dispute through dialogue and peaceful methods so as to spare the Red Sea region any danger posed to the security and safety of international navigation in this vital region of the world.

Meets With Salih; Comments Reported

JN3012175495 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1220 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Announcer-read report; from the "News Follow-Up" program — italicized passages recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Brother President Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih met in his office this morning with UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali and discussed with him our country's relations with the United Nations and current regional issues, led by the Eritrean attack on the al-Hanish al-Kabir Island and what the United Nations can do to resolve the dispute on the island. At the end of the meeting, the brother president granted the al-Wahdah Medal of the First Class to Dr. Butrus-Ghali. [passage omitted]

After receiving the medal, the UN secretary general made a statement to reporters in which he indicated that his talks with the brother president were positive and dealt with the situation in the al-Hanish al-Kabir Island. Dr. Butrus-Ghali said: *The talks held between the president of the Republic of Yemen and the UN secretary general were extremely positive. I stressed the United Nations' readiness to extend all services to the Republic of Yemen. We also discussed the dispute that took place. His excellency the president stressed his interest in a peaceful settlement of this dispute. The United Nations is fully prepared to make good offices to find that settlement peacefully, on condition that both parties agree to those good offices. His excellency the president granted me that highest medal. I am proud of this medal. I thank the president and the Yemeni people and Government. I wish Yemen brotherhood and success. Before anything else, I wish peace to prevail in that dear area of the Arab homeland.*

For his part, Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, responded to reporters' questions on the developments in the situation in the al-Hanish island and the results of the contacts and mediations on this issue.

In response to a question on the results of the Ethiopian prime minister's mediation, the foreign minister said: *The discussions with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi were frank and clear and contained extremely positive ideas. I believe that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi left Sanaa more optimistic than ever before about the possibility of arriving at a peaceful solution to the problem. So far, we have not heard officially about the outcome of his mediation after his meeting with the Eritrean president. Yemen's stand is explicit and clear. The al-Hanish al-Kabir Island must be cleared of the military presence. At first, the Eritreans refused to evacuate Zuqar. However, we say that the Zuqar Island is 18 nautical miles away from the Yemeni coast and 32 nautical miles from the Eritrean coast. The al-Hanish al-Kabir Island is 28 nautical miles away from the Yemeni coast and 32 nautical miles from the Eritrean coast. I personally told the Ethiopian foreign minister that if there is an island 28 nautical miles away from the Eritrean coast, we will not object to any Eritrean presence in it, but the Zuqar Island has throughout the ages been Yemeni. The Yemeni navy has been holding exercises there since the early sixties. The link between al-Hanish al-Kabir and Zuqar is undoubtedly logical. This is especially true since the (?dispute), disagreement, and aggression took place at one point. Linking the other points is a means not to end the dispute. We were optimistic about the possible success of the Ethiopian mediation because we believed that the Ethiopian efforts, besides the Egyptian efforts to arrive at a peaceful solution, were welcome.*

[Unidentified correspondent] *You said you have not yet heard about the results of the Ethiopian prime minister's visit [word indistinct]?*

Foreign Minister al-Iryani said: *We have not heard anything yet. But, news agencies, and some people say that both parties are in agreement on demilitarization of Hanish al-Kabir Island. [Words indistinct]. There is Hanish al-Kabir and Hanish al-Saghir [words indistinct]*

On Yemen's stand on the Eritrean authorities' rejection of any mediation, the brother foreign minister said: *This concerns the head of state of another country. We speak on behalf of the Republic of Yemen which seeks with all its power to solve the dispute peacefully.*

On the visit by a Russian envoy to Sanaa and whether there is a Russian initiative, the foreign minister said: *There is no initiative. The visit to Sanaa and Eritrea was for fact finding purposes.*

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On the international organizations and their stand [words indistinct] the brother foreign minister said: *The international organizations act only if they are asked to do so. The Republic of Yemen, the party which was attacked, preferred to keep the issue on a regional level. Referring the issue to the international level could complicate the problem. We thought the other side believed the same thing, that it prefers a regional role. If a regional role is rejected, then we will be forced to go to the international bodies.*

Received by House Speaker al-Ahmar

JN3012181695 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother Shaykh 'Abdallah Bin-Husayn al-Ahmar, speaker of the House of Representatives, today received UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali, who is currently visiting our country.

At the outset of the meeting, the House speaker welcomed our country's guest and his accompanying delegation. The speaker underlined the missions and tasks performed by this international organization and the fair role which it should play to resolve armed conflicts worldwide.

Regarding the Eritrean attack on the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir, the House speaker reasserted our country's firm position on this issue. He stressed Yemen's eagerness to maintain stability in the Red Sea region, since this is very important for international navigation.

For his part, UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali said the United Nations is a political agency that serves the member states and that these states should use this agency in the interest of peoples, especially for development purposes. He said his visit to our country is within the context of promoting development ties between our country and the United Nations. He praised the advanced step made by Yemen with respect to its democratic experiment. He also stressed the role of democratic parliaments in helping this international organization, which seeks to promote peace and development worldwide.

Prefers 'Regional Settlement'

JN3012205095 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali asserted that the United Nations is willing to extend technical assistance to promote economic development in the Republic of Yemen.

At a news conference organized by the UN Information Center at the Republican Palace in Sanaa this evening, UN Secretary General Butrus Butrus-Ghali said he reviewed with Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih today bilateral issues of interest to our country and the United Nations, as well as Arab, regional and international issues.

The UN secretary general said he discussed a host of issues with the speaker of the House of Representatives, the prime minister, and the deputy prime minister and foreign minister. These issues deal with economic development and the assistance the United Nations can offer to promote economic and social development in Yemen. The UN secretary general said he is proud of the al-Wahdah Medal of the First Order which the president awarded him. He noted that the Republic of Yemen takes part in various activities that are of interest to the United Nations and the international family, since Yemen is a member state in the international organization that should pay attention to the issues that interest the international family. He said these contributions support the United Nations.

Commenting on UN efforts to resolve the dispute that resulted from the Eritrean attack on the Yemeni island of al-Hanish al-Kabir and the threat to navigation in the Red Sea, the UN secretary general said: The United Nations prefers a regional settlement. If a settlement is not reached, however, then the United Nations is fully ready to play the role of mediator.

The UN secretary general pointed out that this issue may be referred to the UN General Assembly and the Security Council if the United Nations is asked by one of the parties or both of them. He added: It would be better if this issue was settled on the regional level through direct contacts between the two sides. He said the United Nations cannot intervene in any international issue unless one of the parties to the dispute asks for this. He pointed out that so far no request has been made by any of the two parties and that his visit is a personal initiative to listen to the views of both sides and present a report to the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. The UN secretary general hoped that a regional settlement will be reached.

In his news conference, the UN secretary general spoke about several Arab, regional, and international issues and about the UN role towards these issues.

The news conference was attended by local, Arab, and foreign media representatives in Sanaa, and the director of the UN Information Center in Sanaa.

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Russian Envoy Departs Yemen for Eritrea

JN3012144495 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Vladimir Sishov, personal envoy of the Russian Federation's foreign minister, left Sanaa today after a visit of several days to our country. During the visit, the Russian envoy conveyed a message from the Russian Government to Dr. 'Abd-al-karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister. He held talks with a number of Foreign Ministry officials on the developments of the Eritrean attack on the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island.

In a statement to the YEMENI NEWS AGENCY, SABA', the Russian envoy expressed happiness with the good will he felt [words indistinct] the Yemeni political leadership to arrive at a settlement of the crisis with Eritrea (?caused) by the aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish Island through peaceful means. [words indistinct] and tension in this strategic area of the world. (?He hoped) that Ethiopia's mediation efforts and the UN secretary general's efforts would succeed in arriving at a peaceful solution to the crisis. He added: We in Russia are ready to do our part in this direction. He indicated that he will head for Eritrea to explore the Eritreans' views on the issue. He stressed that bilateral contacts with our country and Eritrea will succeed and that peace, security, and stability will prevail in this important region.

Yemeni Foreign Minister on Bid To Resolve Dispute

JN3112145395 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Statement by Yemeni Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani given to Amman radio via telephone from Sanaa; date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] Efforts under way to arrive at a peaceful resolution of the Yemeni-Eritrean problem are now focused on those by Ethiopia and supported by whatever efforts the UN secretary general will make.

Regarding the Ethiopian efforts, we are expecting the arrival of Ethiopia's foreign minister to convey to us the results of the talks the Ethiopian side held with its Eritrean counterpart. This is in light of proposals presented to the Ethiopian side here in Sanaa in order to reach a peaceful solution to this crisis. When the Ethiopian side left, we felt, or it actually stressed to us, that it has become optimistic more than ever before, because the problem cana be solved.

We really believe that the problem can be resolved peacefully provided that everything be restored to the way it was before the Eritrean aggression. The problem can also be resolved peacefully based on the rationale that if Eritrea has any legal and legitimate claims to al-Hanish al-Kabir island, then the evacuation of this place and defusing the sedition between the two countries would not affect the legitimate claim of the actual owner of this island.

Peacemaking in areas of conflict throughout the world begins by disarming these areas. There was a conflict on this island. Thus, it must be disarmed and freed of any military presence so that we can negotiate calmly.

The UN secretary general's role is to probe the views of both sides. However, I told him that the two countries will need technical assistance in terms of demarcating the sea borders, because the issue is somewhat complicated and even in terms of legal advice. The UN secretary general left saying that he will not be a mediator unless the two sides desire his assistance.

We welcome any efforts by the secretary general. We believe that when Yemen and Eritrea reach a solution based on the International Maritime Law Agreement and on the principles of international law, the two sides will need technical assistance and legal advice which we hope the United Nations will provide.

Eritrean Coverage of Conflict Over Islands

WA2012150095

For further reportage of the Eritrean-Yemeni confrontation over the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea, including official Eritrean Foreign Ministry statements, please see the East Africa section of the 19 December Sub-Saharan Africa DAILY REPORT and subsequent issues.

Inter-Arab Affairs

Arab League Praises Efforts To End Islands Dispute

NC3112193395 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1800 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Cairo, 31 Dec (MENA)— The Arab League General Secretariat has welcomed the efforts made by Egypt and Ethiopia to contain the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict, noting that these efforts have led to the release of the Yemeni POW's as a first step toward restoring the pre-15 December situation on the Hanish al-Kabir Island and settling the dispute by peaceful means in line with international charters and international law.

In a statement released to the press today, the Arab League General Secretariat said that it is continuing its consultations with the OAU over the developments in this conflict. [passage omitted]

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New League Assistant Secretary General Sworn In

NC3112210295 Cairo MENA in English 1625 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] CAIRO, Dec 31 (MENA)—Muwaffaq al-'Allaf took the oath before Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid as his assistant for Arab affairs in succession to ambassador 'Adnan 'Imran.

Following being sworn in, al-'Allaf, Syrian national, voiced his hope that the league would overcome the challenges facing it. Realising comprehensive peace is considered one of the most difficult challenges facing the Arab world, he added.

Islamic Affairs

Islamic World League Session Opens in Mecca

LD2912141295 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] God willing, His Royal Highness Prince Majid Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, governor of Mecca region, will open, on behalf of King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, God save him, the 34th session of the Constituent Assembly of the Islamic World League at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Islamic League World in Mecca tomorrow morning. The session will be attended by his grace the chairman of the Constituent Assembly of the Islamic World League, as well as the chief mufti of the kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] and Shaykh 'Abd-al-'Aziz Bin-'Abdallah Bin-Baz, chairman of the board of senior ulema, and the members of the assembly.

During this session a new secretary general for the league will be elected by the members of the Constituent Assembly who represent the peoples of the Islamic world and the Muslim minorities and communities in the world. He will replace Dr. Ahmad Muhammad 'Ali, the league's current secretary general, who has been elected chairman of the Islamic Development Bank. [passage omitted]

The main issues that will be raised and discussed include the issue of Jerusalem and the Islamic sanctities, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burma, the Philippines, eastern Europe, and the Muslims in the former Soviet Union.

Prince Majid Gives Opening Address

LD3012235895 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On behalf of King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, His Royal Highness Prince Majid Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, governor of the Mecca region, opened the 34th session of the Constituent Assembly of the Muslim World League at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Muslim World League in holy Mecca this morning.

The opening session was attended by Shaykh 'Abd-al-'Aziz Bin-'Abdallah Bin-Baz, chairman of the Constituent Assembly of the Muslim World League, chief mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and chairman of the board of senior ulema; Dr. 'Abdallah Bin-Salih Bin-Ubayd, new secretary general of the Muslim World League; and members of the assembly.

The session opened with Koranic verses, followed by a speech by the custodian of the two holy mosques delivered on his behalf by Prince Majid Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, may God safeguard him. The following is the text of the speech:

Thanks be to the Almighty, the God of the universe. Prayers and peace be upon the noblest of messengers and prophet, our master Muhammad, his family, and companions. [passage omitted]

The meeting of the members of the league's Constituent Assembly who are here as representatives of Muslim peoples and minorities shows that God-fearing Muslim peoples adhere to the principles of Muslim solidarity in order to find just solutions to their problems.

However, a number of mischievous people are trying to attack Muslim solidarity and harm Islamic principles by perpetrating crimes which kill innocent people, crimes which God prohibits, with which peaceful people are terrorized and the nation's advanced achievements are destroyed. The image of the Muslim individual is harmed by terrorist acts committed in the name of Islam; Islam disowns these acts. The people who commit these acts would rather serve the goals of the enemies of Islamic nation.

In order to correct such misconceptions about Islam, we considered it necessary to point out a number of priorities, which we hope your esteemed assembly will study in order to find solutions:

First: To examine the means of applying Shari'ah to the life of all Muslims in order to help them achieve happiness in this life and in the hereafter and to show that Islam is a religion which calls for justice, peace, and good deeds.

Second: To examine the situation of Muslims in strife-torn areas, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, and elsewhere.

Third: To examine the status of holy Jerusalem and the Israeli attempts to judaize its character by transforming it into a capital for the Jewish state by moving foreign

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embassies to it. Also, to examine holy Muslim sanctities in occupied Palestine, foremost of which is holy al-Masjid al-Aqsa [the mosque of the dome].

Fourth: To draw up the necessary plans to counter cultural and information campaigns against Islam and Muslims in foreign media.

Fifth: To bolster the work of the Islamic call in the world in accordance with the teaching of the Koran and the prophet. This will protect Muslim preachers from making unnecessary mistakes and exaggerations.

Sixth: To study problems facing Muslim minorities in a bid to help them to strengthen their faith and their Muslim personality and help them overcome their difficulties. [passage omitted]

The members of the Constituent Assembly of the Muslim World League in Mecca this morning held an organizational session at the league's headquarters. [passage omitted]

Shaykh 'Abd-al-'Aziz Bin-Baz stated that King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al- 'Aziz has given a directive to nominate Dr. 'Abdallah Bin-Salih Ubayd for the position of secretary general in accordance with Article 16 of the league's statute which states that the league's secretary general should be a Saudi national, following the appointment of Ahmad Muhammad 'Ali, former secretary general, as director of the Islamic Development Bank. Dr. Ubayd was unanimously elected secretary general of the league by the assembly's members, who expressed satisfaction over this noble nomination.

Palestinian Affairs

PA, Hamas 'Secretly' Agree To Halt Operations

NC2812142495 Cairo ROSE AL-YUSUF in Arabic 25 Dec 95 p 18

[Report by Wa'il al-Abrashi]

[FBIS Translated Text] A Palestinian Authority [PA] official has told ROSE AL-YUSUF that Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and the PA have secretly agreed to halt military operations (a temporary truce) until the PA completes the implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement. Hamas official Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar told ROSE AL-YUSUF: We are trying to reach a formula that will balance PA demands with Hamas' national demands. This means we can rationalize Hamas military activity to serve the Palestinian people—rationalize, not cancel, because it is out of the question to cancel the principle of jihad.

Al-Zahhar added: There is a legal justification for Hamas to decide on a truce. We tell 'Arafat and the PA: "Take your time. We will see what you can do and what you can achieve." But we will not announce a complete halt to military operations, because for us this is tantamount to canceling prayers.

Election Campaign Period Postponed Until 7 Jan

JN3012143695 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] According to the presidential decree issued by President Yasir 'Arafat last night, the beginning of the official election campaign period for the legislative elections has been postponed until 7 January instead of tomorrow, Sunday. The election campaign period will last for 14 days instead of 22 days.

Meanwhile, the Central Election Committee called on all candidates to abide by the dates of the official election campaign period.

Statement Lists Changes to Distribution of Seats

TA3012165095 Jerusalem JMCC PRESS SERVICE in English 30 Dec 95

["Elections Update: Election Campaign Postponed" — received from the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center via fax]

[FBIS Translated Text] Following is a statement by the Central Elections Commission issued from Ramallah today, 30 December 1995:

Following a Presidential Decree issued on December 29, 1995, a certain number of changes to the timetable for the first Palestinian Elections that will be held in January 20, 1996, have been decided.

The Presidential Decree fixes the number of seats in the Palestinian Council at 88 with the President who will also be elected on January 20 being ex officio the 89th member of the Council. The additional five seats are two for the constituency of Gaza City, one for Khan Yunus, one for Hebron, and one for Jerusalem. The overall distribution of seats among the 16 constituencies is now the following:

District	Mandates
1. Jerusalem	7
2. Jericho	1
3. Bethlehem [Note 2]	4
4. Janin	6
5. Hebron	10
6. Ramallah	7

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District	Mandates
7. Salfit	1
8. Tubas	1
9. Tulkarm	4
10. Qalqilyah	2
11. Nabulus	8
12. North Gaza	7
13. Gaza City	12
14. Central Gaza	5
15. Khan Yunus	8
16. Rafah	5

With the constituency of Jerusalem two seats are reserved for declared Christian candidates, as well as two in Bethlehem, one in Ramallah and one in Gaza.

Within the constituency of Nabulus one seat is reserved for the Samaritan minority.

Following the latest Presidential Decree, nominations in all 16 constituencies have been reopened today until tomorrow, Sunday December 31, 1995. The Final Statement of Persons Nominated will be published on January 5, 1996. The same day, the election campaign, which was initially due to begin today, will officially start. The election campaign will end on January 18. There will be no campaigning on election day and the day before.

Voter registration has been reopened as well. It will close on January 5. This gives a special opportunity for prisoners that are expected to be released from Israeli detention the possibility to register. Prisoners were also able to be registered through their families during the initial voters registration campaign. Nevertheless the District Election Offices and the Polling Station Commissions today published the Final Voters Register which contains an overall of about 1,013,000 potential voters. New registrations until January 5 will be published in a Supplementary Register on January 17.

Abu-Rudaynah Says Decree on Elections Legal

JN0201090796 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0600 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat's adviser, explained that Presidential Decree No. 6 for 1995, distributing the five new seats on the various constituencies was issued on the basis of Law No. 16 for 1995 on amending the Elections Law.

Abu-Rudaynah stressed that the law was issued in due legal form in which all procedural aspects were taken into account such as the endorsement by the PLO Executive Committee, the Palestine National Council Speaker's Office, the NA Council of Ministers, and public interest considerations.

Abu-Rudaynah said that the presidential decree came after the belated approval to increase the number of the Legislative Council's seats from 83 to 88 and to achieve balance among all constituencies, and to give a chance to all those who wish to nominate themselves, particularly the national and Islamic opposition forces, to achieve national interest.

Abu-Rudaynah said that the NA and President 'Arafat are eager to achieve and enhance national unity and the participation of all political forces and trends for building the homeland.

EU Accuses 'Arafat of 'Meddling' With Polls

MS0201102296 London THE GUARDIAN in English 2 Jan 96 p 8

[Report by Derek Brown: "'Arafat 'Tinkers with Polls'"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem — The Palestinian leader, Yasir 'Arafat, was sharply criticised yesterday by European Union [EU] observers of this month's general election for persistently meddling with the polling rules.

The PLO chief was lambasted — though not named — in a statement, headed Enough is Enough, from the head of the EU election unit, the former Swedish diplomat Carl Lidbom.

He obliquely questioned the independence of the election commission appointed by Mr 'Arafat and complained of confusion and uncertainty caused by a stream of decrees altering the election procedure.

He said: "The European Union electoral unit believes that the series of improvisations and irregularities should now cease if the forthcoming elections are to retain any credibility, both locally and internationally, and calls on the Palestinian National Authority and its chairman ['Arafat] to take urgent steps to try to build public and international confidence in the election process."

An official of the central election commission said last night that it was meeting to consider the EU statement.

The strong language reflects the growing exasperation of the EU and other observers, who were warmly welcomed at the outset of the election process but have lately been given the cold shoulder by the Palestinian Authority.

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The original election commission resigned last month to clear the way for a new, supposedly neutral commission to oversee the nomination of candidates, the campaign, and the polling, scheduled for January 20.

Mr 'Arafat who took 40 days to promulgate the election law, finally signed it in early December. Since then he has issued decree after decree tinkering with procedure and in some cases making significant alterations.

Observers of his operating style are not surprised. For 30 years he has insisted on running the Palestinian cause as a one-man band. His inability to delegate has become the central feature of self-rule government, in which little is contemplated, let alone achieved, without his blessing.

The election machine, assembled over many months to give Palestinians their first experience of democracy, is now being run at least as much from Mr 'Arafat's headquarters in Gaza as from the electoral commission office in Ramallah.

He has arbitrarily increased the number of seats in the new council, from 82 to 87 at the last count. He has ordered the reopening of candidate nominations in all constituencies, not just the ones allocated extra seats.

Registration of electors was continuing last week, almost a fortnight after it was supposed to be completed. Most ominously, the official campaigning period has been cut from 22 to 14 days, which, says Mr Lidbom, "breaches the election law and adds to the difficulties of the independent candidates and the opposition parties".

Mr 'Arafat has also, belatedly, appointed a PLO aide, Mahmud 'Abbas [as published], to head the election commission. Mr 'Abbas, better known as Abu Mazin was a principal architect of the first self-rule accord with Israel and is still said to be a close confidant of the PLO leader. He has yet to meet the EU observers to discuss their concerns.

Yesterday's statement acidly noted: "At such a meeting Mr Lidbom would have listened with interest to an explanation of why the central election commission was not set up earlier and why none of the allocations of seats was issued in the name of the central election commission, the supreme body organising the elections, which was given that specific task in the election law.

"The first allocation of seats was done instead by presidential decree and the number of seats has subsequently been changed twice, also by presidential decree. Mr Lidbom would also have welcomed reassurance from Mr 'Abbas about the political independence of the central election commission."

The EU, which has largely funded the election process, will have 300 observers in position by polling day. Hundreds more international monitors are expected from Japan, Norway, Canada and elsewhere.

Yesterday REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERES issued a report on election coverage by Palestinian radio and television. It said that opposition parties and independent candidates had relatively open access to radio broadcasts, but that the television coverage was the exclusive preserve of Fatah.

3 Hamas Members To Run in Council Elections

TA3012195395 Jerusalem JMCC Press Service in English 30 Dec 95

["Elections Update: Three Hamas To Participate" — received from the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center via fax]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] affiliates Sa'id al-Namruti, Isma'il Haniyah, and Khalid al-Hindi from the Gaza Strip decided to participate in the Palestinian legislative council elections as independent nominees. The three were delegates in the first mediation committee between Hamas and PA in Khartoum. They have jointly collected their 500 signatures and will be going tomorrow to register themselves for as nominees.

Sa'id al-Namruti, from Khan Yunus, is the manager of sales in the Islamic University. He was arrested by the Israeli military as a Hamas activist, and is the brother of martyr Yasir al-Namruti, a member of Hamas military branch 'Izz-al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. He said that "we have decided to participate in the elections after nominees registration was reopened." Al-Namruti explained that he "does not think that there will be a problem," when asked about violating Hamas' decision to boycott the elections, "we all raise the banner of dealing with reality." But he did not want to explain their political project and said that they will announce it after they submit their registration application tomorrow.

Isma'il Haniyah from al-Shati' Refugee Camp is the Islamic University Board of Trustees undersecretary. He was one of the 400 Hamas activists expelled by Israel at the end of 1992.

Khalid al-Hindi is from Gaza City and an Islamic University alumni.

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Spokesman: Nominees Not Hamas Members

JN0101110196 Amman AL-ASWAQ in Arabic
1 Jan 96 p 1, 15

[Report by 'Umar Kallab]

[FBIS Translated Text] An official source of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] denied a report that four movement members decided to nominate themselves for the elections of the Palestinian legislative council.

In a statement to AL-ASWAQ, Hamas Spokesman Engineer Ibrahim Ghawshah said the movement's position on the elections — to boycott them because they do not suit the Palestinian people — continues to be firm.

Ghawshah said the people who want to nominate themselves are not members of Hamas as they and the Palestinian Authority claimed. He added that these people led the mediation committee between the authority and Hamas in the talks held in Khartoum early last October. They announced then that they do not represent Hamas, and the National Authority said in a statement at that time that they are mediators. How can it be said now that they are from Hamas?

It was reported that four people said to be Hamas members decided to nominate themselves for the elections of the Palestinian self-rule council hours before the deadline for nomination yesterday evening. The four people are Khalid al-Hindi, Isma'il Haniyah, Samih al-Madani, and Ahmad al-Namruti.

Nomination for the Palestinian elections, which will take place on 20 January, ended at 2000 yesterday. There are 712 candidates contesting 88 seats. The election campaign will begin on 7 January.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian People's Party decided to participate in the elections. The party adopted an unclear position until the day before the end of the nomination period. 'Arafat al-Ashhab, secretary general of the party [name and title as published] decided the party's participation in the elections last Saturday.

Qaddumi Explains Opposition to 'Arafat, Accord

NC3012163195 Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic
24 Dec 95 p 9

[Interview with PLO Political Department Chief Faruq Qaddumi by Amin Muhammad Amin in Conakry; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Amin] Does your opposition to the Oslo agreement mean you are demanding a halt to the current Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities?

[Qaddumi] I know full well that it is not easy to turn things back. But I stick to my full reservations about what is going on, knowing that more than half of the Palestinian people express reservations about and do not agree with what is taking place. At the same time, I realize that the Palestine question is so complicated that it needs lots of time and patience to be resolved.

For example, the Israelis are saying that the West Bank and Gaza were not ruled by the Palestinians before, that they were captured from Jordan and Egypt in 1967. U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and U.S. Congress members had a discussion on this, with congressmen asking how the United States can accept the return [to Palestinians] of disputed territories. Rabin took advantage of this and began to ignore agreements and dates. He delayed the withdrawal for about five months. An Israeli withdrawal was supposed to take place first and a one-year transitional period to start. But the one year became two years. Under Oslo, we were reduced to a limited self-rule.

But despite the rejection and the contradictions, we are working carefully to preserve the unity of Palestinian action. As a socialist, I am implementing Mao Tse-Tung's slogan, and as a chief of Palestinian diplomacy, I will not make concessions. I am fully committed to the full implementation of the Palestine National Council [PNC] resolutions, the PNC being the representative of all Palestinians. No one can claim that he represents everyone like Faruq Qaddumi can; Qaddumi works to serve the Palestinian cause, not to assume a post in the Authority. I explained this in my first letter to my brothers in the occupied territory; I stressed that we are not seeking power.

[Amin] So what are you specifically demanding?

[Qaddumi] My demands are clear: a full solution to the Palestinian problem and the return of all legitimate rights. These rights are represented by the removal of all settlements, the restoration of Jerusalem, the return of refugees, an end to all forms and manifestations of occupation, the return of the displaced, the release of all prisoners, and a halt to land confiscation. If these issues remain unresolved, what, then, have we done other than chasing after power, as if we were hungry for power?

The occupied territory is left with nothing other than some PLO members. This serves Rabin's objective. He wanted to keep them there under pressure so that they would make further concessions. He wanted to pursue a policy of pressure, starvation, and siege against the Palestinian people so that their main concern would be to find bread for survival.

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At the same time, Rabin deceived us and said the issue is Israel's security. Did the Palestinian police go there to protect Israel's security? Throughout the occupation Gaza was protected by the convoys of revolutionaries and needed no [outside] protection.

[Amin] If things are like this, why do you remain in your position, representing Palestinian diplomacy while disagreeing with the leadership, specifically with 'Arafat?

[Qaddumi] The Palestinian leadership is not 'Arafat. Nine of the PLO Executive Committee members are against 'Arafat, and I am one of them. They rejected the Oslo and Taba agreements. 'Arafat is an individual, and I am the secretary of the Fatah Central Committee. Despite these disagreements, as I explained, I am eager not to cause division so as to keep our objective.

'Arafat realizes full well that he is engaged in an unmeasured adventure. I reminded him of this in the Arab League when he said: If I wanted to write about the shortcomings of the Oslo agreement, I could write a volume. I replied: My Brother Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat], I will exempt you from this task and I will write three volumes about Oslo's shortcomings.

[Amin] So how, in your opinion, can things be rectified in practice, noting that the peace process has started and cannot be pulled backward?

[Qaddumi] As I said, it is an adventure that is not easy to predict, and we started it on this basis because of the difficult circumstances that were imposed on us. Some of us took it upon ourselves to go ahead with it. We have to protect them, but with each of us keeping his views and opinions to preserve the Palestinian cause. A month ago, I offered a transitional national plan for salvation from the crisis in which the Palestine question found itself. It says the brothers inside [the West Bank and Gaza] should take responsibility for what is happening and that the PLO Executive Committee and the PNC members should remain outside, especially that the Oslo agreement prevents the Palestinian Authority from establishing any diplomatic relations. It is therefore in our interest for us to remain outside.

[Amin] Was the plan rejected?

[Qaddumi] The plan is still there, and some believe that it should be given more time so that a clearer view can be formed.

[Amin] What about the upcoming elections?

[Qaddumi] They are premature because they are supposed to be held after the full Israeli withdrawal from the entire Palestinian territory. They are being held under Israeli terms and control, which makes them not free.

[Amin] It has been noted that some Arabs are rushing to normalize relations with Israel under the pretext that the people directly concerned with the Palestine question began moves toward a settlement.

[Qaddumi] Regrettably, there is an Arab rush. But it is surprising that such a rush should come from Arab countries geographically far from Israel. We urge the brothers not to rush to normalize relations with Israel and recognize it and not to lift the Arab boycott before the return of all legitimate Arab rights. If the national interests of the brothers necessitate such a rush, I hope they will not link this to the Palestinian issue.

Islamic Front Calls For National Unity, Dialogue

JN2912200295 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Palestinian Islamic Front stressed its desire for national unity and voiced its support for the National Authority. In a statement issued this evening, the front stressed that in line with its faith in the need to consolidate and improve the Palestinian situation, it will take part in the reconstruction of the Palestinian infrastructure. The statement notes that weakening the national unity will serve nobody except the enemy.

The Palestinian Islamic Front called for opening a national dialogue, bilaterally and collectively, with Palestinian parties and forces to transcend clannishness, tribalism, and parochialism.

'Intensive' Efforts Under Way for Minisummit

TA3112114595 Jerusalem AL-QUDS in Arabic 31 Dec 95 pp 1, 23

["Exclusive" AL-QUDS report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, Inter-Media — Arab diplomatic sources have told AL-QUDS that intensive efforts are currently under way to convene a minisummit in Cairo.

The sources added that last week's visit by Egyptian President Husni Mubarak to al-'Aqabah, which came about in tandem with intensive Egyptian efforts directed at Damascus and Riyadh, focused in particular on the possibility of convening this summit as soon as possible with the participation of Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat, Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad, and Jordan's King Husayn.

The sources said that Mubarak discussed this idea with al-Asad and with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud

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al-Faysal during their visits to Cairo and that the current climate gives rise to the possibility of holding such a meeting.

The sources said that Saudi Arabia might participate in the summit and that its delegation would be headed by Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz because of the condition of the Saudi king, who is convalescing after his recent illness. Saudi Arabia's participation, however, is not certain yet.

The Arab diplomatic sources say that the launching of the Syrian-Israeli negotiating track has objectively removed many of the obstacles that prevented a quadripartite meeting in the past. The sources note that Damascus no longer has any justification for criticizing the Jordanian and Palestinian political performances after its recent decision to accelerate its participation in the peace process convoy. [passage omitted]

Civilian Powers Transferred in Hebron

JN2912150795 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] An agreement was signed last night on transferring 17 civilian powers to the National Authority in the Hebron area, which is located within the B area.

Ahmad Faris, director general of the Civilian Affairs Ministry; 'Abd-al-Majid al-Suwayti, director of the Hebron area for civilian affairs; and Fakhri al-Dik, assistant director general of the ministry, signed the agreement for the Palestinian side. On the Israeli side, the agreement was signed by Barukh Najjar, the occupation authorities' military governor of Hebron; and Fu'ad Hillel, director of the occupation authorities' civil administration.

Among the most important of these powers are planning, construction, antiquities, environment, justice, and public works.

'Arafat Chairs Cabinet Session in Ramallah

JN3012200695 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat chaired the cabinet's weekly session in the liberated city of Ramallah this afternoon. The ministers who resigned to run in the elections did not attend the session.

President 'Arafat briefed cabinet members on measures taken regarding redeployment in the Hebron governorate and the National Authority's takeover of the cities of Ramallah and al-Birah and Palestinian towns. President 'Arafat also declared the governorates of Ramallah and al-Birah liberated for good from Israeli occupation.

The cabinet agreed to the amendment in the 1995 election law regarding the number of the Legislative Assembly members and extending the deadline for nomination. The cabinet reviewed presidential decree no. 6 of 1995 on increasing the seats of the Legislative Assembly by two deputies in the Gaza constituency and by one deputy for Khan Yunus, Jerusalem, and Hebron. The deadline for nomination has been extended until 2400 next Sunday. It was also agreed to use schools for election campaigns only after official duty hours.

President Yasir 'Arafat said: Today, we are making the history of Palestine, an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. Addressing tens of thousands of citizens in Ramallah, the president urged the people of the city of Jerusalem to cast their votes in the upcoming Palestinian legislative elections to defend the Arabism of Jerusalem.

President Yasir 'Arafat declared the cities of Ramallah and al-Birah liberated from the Israeli occupation which lasted 28 years. He called on Palestinians in the diaspora to return to the homeland, saying that the Palestinian land welcomes its people everywhere. President 'Arafat extended his congratulations to Christians in Ramallah and al-Birah and elsewhere in Palestine on Christmas. He stressed the need to consolidate Islamic-Christian national unity.

Abu-Middayn: Israel Uses Prisoners as 'Hostages'

JN3012153495 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Former Minister of Justice Furayh Abu-Middayn announced that a meeting will be held with the Israeli side this week to discuss releasing the Palestinian prisoners.

In a statement to our radio, Abu-Middayn regretted the intransigent Israeli position which was displayed during the meeting last Thursday concerning the Palestinian demand to release prisoners and detainees in accordance with the Oslo B agreement. He said the Israeli statement about releasing 1,100 detainees is a deceptive one because half of those detainees are civilians, and the second half are those whose imprisonment terms are about to end.

He added that the Israelis view the issue of prisoners as a one of hostages. He emphasized that there is no meaning for liberating the land without liberating the human being, and said the Palestinian side is determined to demand releasing the prisoners in accordance with the Oslo B agreement.

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'Arafat Orders Release of AL-QUDS Editor

TA3112070995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0505 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Palestinian journalist Mahir al-'Alami, who was arrested last week by Jibril al-Rujub's men, was released yesterday on orders from Yasir 'Arafat and later met with him in Ramallah. Al-'Alami told Qol Yisra'el yesterday: The Palestinian newspapers do not enjoy freedom of the press. None of my colleagues reported the fact that I was arrested because they were afraid. [passage omitted]

Arab-Israeli Talks

Maryland Talks Conclude; Negotiators To Stay

JN2912212595 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 2100 GMT 29 Dec 95

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Syrian-Israeli talks were concluded in Maryland, near Washington, this evening.

U.S. State Department Spokesman John Dinger described the talks as useful and conducive to further discussion. He said that the participants will remain in the area and will hold informal discussions with U.S. participation. Dinger said that the participants in this first round of talks were expected to return to the Middle East for weekend consultations. However, the United States proposed and the Syrian and Israeli delegations agreed to a change in the plans.

The second round of discussions between the two parties is scheduled to start on Wednesday [3 January].

Syria's al-Mu'allim on First Round of Talks

JN3112115595 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0515 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Washington — Walid al-Mu'allim, head of the Syrian delegation to the peace talks in Washington, described the first round of talks [with Israel] as exploratory and useful. In a statement to AFP yesterday, he said that all elements of the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks were discussed during this round of talks.

He said the U.S. peace process sponsor suggested that the two delegation heads continue unofficial consultations with U.S. participation, after which the topics that will be discussed in the three-day second round of talks, which will start on Wednesday [3 January], will be specified.

Al-Mu'allim denied that any topics relating to economic cooperation in the occupied Golan were discussed in the talks.

In an interview with Radio Orient carried last night, he said that Syria's position on this issue is clear and declared and is based on rejecting any dealing with any symbol of occupation, whether military or civilian.

Al-Mu'allim added: The gap still exists between the Syrian and Israeli positions. However, the atmosphere has become better and more serious. The U.S. sponsor is determined to continue efforts to bridge the gap between the two positions. Therefore, he asked the two parties to keep their delegations in Washington for further consultations and preparation for Wednesday's round, which will specify the topics, proposals, and ideas that will be carried by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher during his forthcoming visit to the region on 10 January.

On transferring the venue of talks from Washington, al-Mu'allim denied that this issue was discussed during the talks, saying: After Madrid, we started negotiations in Washington and we will remain in it.

Al-Mu'allim also denied that the issue of the delegations' level was discussed. He noted that the heads of the two delegations were entrusted with sufficient powers by their leaderships.

In an interview with Radio Monte Carlo broadcast last night, Walid al-Mu'allim said that no final understanding was reached on any of the topics that were discussed during the first round, which was concluded in Maryland near Washington. He added: The two parties discussed a number of issues with clarity and seriousness. However, the gaps are still wide.

The head of the Syrian delegation for peace talks dismissed Israeli press speculations that Washington submitted specific proposals for a settlement on the borders between Syria and Israel. He said: The issue of the final withdrawal line for Israel from the occupied Golan is known and fixed: the 4 June 1967 line. Without this, there can be no peace.

He pointed out that Syria wants to achieve a clear and unambiguous peace. [passage omitted]

Says 'Gap Still Exists'

JN3112174295 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1600 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Interview with Walid al-Mu'allim, head of the delegation to the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations, by correspondent Hisham Milhim in Washington; date not given—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Mu'allim] The talks were held with an open mind, without an agenda prepared in advance, and without any preconditions. All the topics

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related to the basic elements of the settlement between Syria and Israel were discussed.

We heard new proposals from the Israeli side which had not been presented previously. The talks dealt with all the topics and not any one issue in particular. The atmosphere was useful and serious, as each side presented its position clearly and explicitly.

All the relevant issues were discussed. For example: What will happen after the agreement is signed? What will happen after it is implemented? What will happen after peace is realized and relations are normalized? No particular issue was discussed in detail. As I said, if we take the entire package with all its elements and dimensions, I can say that a gap still exists on more than one issue.

Says 'No Peace' Without 1967 Border

JN3012211395 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 2000 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Report on interview with Walid al-Mu'allim, Syrian ambassador in Washington and head of the Syrian negotiating team, by correspondent Hisham Milhim in Washington on 30 December; from the "Panorama" feature—italicized passages recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] Syrian Ambassador in Washington Walid al- Mu'allim stated that the first round of peace negotiations with Israel which were held at Wye Plantations, a Washington suburb, and which ended on Friday were an exploratory and general round during which a host of integrated issues were discussed.

Although Ambassador al-Mu'allim said that there are new Israeli proposals and a serious atmosphere, he said that final understanding was not reached on any of the topics discussed.

Al-Mu'allim summed up the round as follows: *Each side submitted its stand with full clarity and in a serious manner. However, the gap still exists.*

The Syrian ambassador vehemently denied press speculations in and outside Israel that Washington had submitted specific proposals for a settlement on the borders between Syria and Israel. He added: *The question of the final withdrawal line for Israel from the Golan is known and fixed — the 4 June 1967 line. Without this, there can be no peace.*

Ambassador al-Mu'allim said that Syria is not interested that these negotiations lead to a declaration of principles agreement with Israel. He said that the objective Syria seeks is to reach a final, clear, and unambiguous peace agreement.

On reports of sharing water resources between Syria and Israel, Ambassador al-Mu'allim said that this topic was raised and discussed but in a general manner. He said that the Syrian stand is that this issue will be discussed within the framework of the bilateral negotiations, and later, within the framework of the multilateral talks, and that it also should be discussed within an international framework, specifically within the framework of the search for international investments to increase water resources in the region.

The Syrian ambassador said that during the last day of the talks the U.S. sponsor suggested that the two delegations remain in Washington to hold unofficial consultations on some issues the Americans wish to put forth during the second round which will begin next Wednesday [3 January] and end on 5 January. He added that it is not clear whether these consultations will take place through three-way meetings, or through contacts Coordinator Dennis Ross will hold with the two parties.

Further on al-Mu'allim's Remarks

JN3112185995 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1615 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In statements to the BBC, Walid al-Mu'allim, head of Syria's delegation the peace talks in Washington, described as exploratory the first round of talks which lasted for three days. He said that this means each party expressed its position on a package that constitutes the basic elements of peace which might be a framework for an agreement between the two countries. He added: Therefore, the talks were more comprehensive than detailed with regard to each element. In the final analysis, it can be said that what has taken place was useful and serious. However, the gap still exists.

Answering a question on his personal evaluation of the possible results of talks in the upcoming days and whether he was optimistic, al-Mu'allim said: It is difficult for the negotiator to use the word optimism, for the negotiator always judges things based on their results. For us in Syria, all details are important. Therefore, I cannot say whether I am optimistic or not. We are awaiting the results.

Al-Mu'allim said that the U.S. sponsor asked the two delegations to stay in Washington to hold consultations.

Asked to explain the continuation of the talks on an unofficial level, he answered: The talks are being held in an official manner, because the negotiators have extensive powers, except the power of decisionmaking. Decisionmaking is always left to the leadership. Hence, what takes place is an exchange of viewpoints. Christopher then goes to the region to either get the decision

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of the leaderships on both sides or to amend what the negotiators agree on.

Asked if there is a possibility of upgrading the level of the negotiations, al-Mu'allim said this issue is not up for discussion just now.

Asked if there is a gap in the stands of the two sides, especially on the four elements proposed for discussion, and about the nature of this gap, the head of the Syrian delegation said: There is a gap regarding the entire package of peace elements. Since we do not discuss each element separately until each side defines its stand on it, I would say the gap is on the entire package, not on a particular element. In other words, the gap exists on the horizons of this package and where they will lead.

Asked if he expects the talks to continue for a long time, al-Mu'allim said that this depends on the seriousness of the Israel side. He stressed that time is an important factor, but that it should not constitute pressure on the negotiators.

Asked about his evaluation of the Israeli delegation's response to Syrian demands until now, al-Mu'allim said: We are hearing a tone in the statements of the Israeli side that is better than before. However, we do not yet sense any commitment in the negotiations.

Syrian Aide: Talks Deal With 'Peace Relations'

MM0201122096 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 1 Jan 96 pp 1, 6

[Report by Ibrahim Humaydi: "Syrian Official Tells AL-HAYAH: Peace Relations Common Interest With Israelis"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Damascus, occupied Jerusalem, AL-HAYAH — A high-ranking Syrian official has confirmed that the negotiations held in Maryland, United States, did not broach the principle of [Israel's] withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines, "because it is Syria's right, and our rights cannot be put on the negotiating table." However, the official pointed out that the negotiations dealt with "normal peace relations, because these are a common interest" for both Syria and Israel. The official said that the two sides discussed "the water issue and prospects of the post-peace stage." [passage omitted]

A high-level Syrian official spoke to AL-HAYAH after reviewing the results of the first round of negotiations with Israel, held in Maryland, near Washington. The official said that the round was "exploratory. There was not a specific agenda or specific conditions. The two delegations raised all the matters concerning a settlement between Syria and Israel." The official added that the two delegations "raised the main elements (of a peace agreement). They are: Withdrawal, normal peace relations, security arrangements, and the timetable" for implementation. The official said that the discussions did not deal with "any element in detail, but, rather, generally. Each delegation presented its position on all the issues concerning a settlement." However, the official stressed that "the gap still exists between the two positions," the Syrian and the Israeli positions.

The official said that "unofficial consultations" have begun with the U.S. peace team over specific issues to be discussed in the second round." The official said that "each party presented its position on the elements both clearly and seriously."

The official pointed out that the negotiations dealt with the following elements: "First, the water issue, which was raised generally, and the framework within which it will be discussed in detail. Second, prospects of the post-peace stage. Third, the issue of economic cooperation in enterprises set up on the Golan was not discussed, because the Syrian position is clear on this question: No dealing or cooperation with any of the occupation's symbols, whether civilian, military, or economic."

Asked whether the Israeli side had backtracked on the demand for a ground early-warning station on the Golan, the official said: "No agreement has taken place. Syria's position is clear, namely not to deal with whatever we consider a symbol of occupation — civilian, military, or economic."

The Syrian official pointed out that the negotiations were different from the previous ones, saying that the difference lies in the fact that "there is a broader scope, and the Israeli negotiator is experienced — which fully reflects the instructions of his prime minister," Shim'on Peres.

The official stressed that the two delegations cannot make decisions, "since they are not authorized to make decisions. We have extensive powers but they do not reach the level of making decisions. Decisions are made by the leaderships of the two countries."

The official pointed to the attempt by some Israeli officials to "distort" the negotiations, saying that they spoke about matters not raised at the negotiations. The official said that the two delegations did not discuss the Lebanon issue or the terrorism issue. Israeli sources had said that Syria agreed to close the offices of "terrorist" organizations in Damascus. Asked whether the Israeli delegation had committed itself to a full withdrawal from the Golan, the official replied: "No specific issue was discussed. The principle of [Israel's] withdrawal

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to the 4 June 1967 lines represents a Syrian right, hence it cannot be put on the negotiating table, since President Hafiz al-Asad said that anyone who thinks that Syria would accept anything less does not want peace." The Syrian official added that what the two delegations negotiated is "how long the withdrawal will take, the timetable, and we are also negotiating over normal peace relations, because these are a common interest, and over security arrangements, because these guarantee security for the two sides," the Syria and Israeli sides. [passage omitted]

Israel's Savir Sees Syria as 'Partner' After Talks

TA2912195995 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1850 GMT 29 Dec 95

[Report on interview with Uri Savir, "head of the Israeli delegation" to the talks with Syria, and Israeli Ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich, by correspondent Ya'aqov Ahime'ir, at the Wye Plantation in Maryland; date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Ahime'ir] Today's meeting at the Wye Plantation is over. It ended exactly 15 minutes ago. Here is some footage of the cars leaving after three days of talks. A short distance from the gates of the Wye Plantation, I managed to conduct a short interview with two members of the Israeli delegation: Uri Savir, the head of the delegation, and Israeli Ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich. Here is the interview and their initial reactions following the talks with the Syrian delegation.

[Begin recording] [Ahime'ir] What did you achieve in the three days of talks?

[Savir] I think that each party has a better understanding of the other side's position. As for concrete developments, we will now brief the prime minister and the foreign minister. The atmosphere was good and we will explore the talks further next week.

[Ahime'ir] Beyond a better understanding of each other's positions, what else was achieved in these talks? Do Syria and Israel expect to formulate a joint declaration of principles at the conclusion of all six days of talks?

[Savir] One must not entertain overly high expectations. There are no new expectations that we did not have to begin with. I think that some degree of progress has been made toward shared perceptions?

[Ahime'ir] With regard to what?

[Savir] With regard to the goals of the negotiations. I do not want to say any more than that.

[Ahime'ir] Ambassador Rabinovich, were these talks different than the previous rounds of talks you held until six months ago at the ambassadorial? What Syrian positions did you discover this time?

[Rabinovich] The change this time is not so much a matter of positions. As you have just heard, we are just starting to peel away the outside layer of the substantive issues, and it is still difficult to point to substantive changes. However, as far as warmth and openness are concerned, it has definitely reached a new level unfamiliar to us in the past.

[Ahime'ir] Uri Savir, do you think that Israel has made progress toward signing a peace agreement with Syria as a result of these three days of talks?

[Savir] Possibly, although it is still too early to reach such a conclusion. I think that on the level of expressing readiness, desire, and seriousness, it sounds like we have a partner. As for the positions, a great deal still has to be clarified on the nature of the Syrian position on the substance of peace. Then of course, all the negotiating process itself still awaits us.

[Ahime'ir] The two countries have therefore still not reached agreement on a joint concept of peace?

[Savir] We listened to each other a great deal, both formally and informally. A great deal of time will still be required before we can reach agreement. I think that Israel's positions on normalization and economic development are far clearer to the Syrian side than in the past.

[Ahime'ir] Ambassador Rabinovich, was the atmosphere really so casual, positive, and even perhaps friendly? After all, I did not get the chance to speak with the Syrians, but you did.

[Rabinovich] I think that this is the first time since your posting in Washington that you are filming me without a tie. That is definitely indicative of the atmosphere and, I would say, the modus [preceding word in English] of the last few days. I would add that we read some of what was published by the Israeli media. There are many inaccurate speculations. Naturally, knowing ourselves, the level of expectations immediately shoots skyward. One must remember that we still have three days of work ahead of us here after we hold consultations over the weekend. After that, the secretary of state will make quite a long trip to the Middle East. All this means that a great deal of work still awaits us from both the technical as well as the substantive angles.

[Ahime'ir] When will Syria and Israel publish a joint declaration of principles detailing their concept of peace?

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[Savir] I do not know.

[Ahime'ir] Is it a matter of weeks? Months?

[Savir] Anyone who gives you such a timetable, and I understand your curiosity, cannot be speaking on the basis of what we know, which is the result of very serious work amid a very positive atmosphere. In my opinion, we will have to continue our work because this is a very serious matter which effects Israel's fate and security, and all the speculations and predictions are uncalled for and unhelpful at this time.

[Ahime'ir] Thank you very much, gentlemen. [end recording]

Savir Briefs Egypt, Jordan Envoys on Talks

NC0101213496 Paris AFP in English 2102 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem, Jan 1 (AFP) — Israel's chief negotiator Uri Savir on Monday [1 January] briefed the ambassadors of Egypt and Jordan on his country's peace talks with Syria, state television said.

Ahmad Mahir, Egypt's ambassador to the United States, and Fayiz al-Tarawinah of Jordan told Savir they hoped Israel and Syria could hammer out a peace deal in less than a year, the television said.

Israel and Syria opened a first three-day round of negotiations at Wye Plantation outside Washington last Wednesday after a suspension of six months. Their negotiators are to meet again next Wednesday.

Both sides hailed the revived talks as positive and useful, though they recognised that they had not yet touched on the fundamental issues such as the future of the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

State television also said the Israeli army was studying the possibility of using observation balloons to monitor Syrian troop movements if the Jewish state withdraws from the Golan, a strategic plateau overlooking northern Israel.

The balloons could be used instead of early warning stations which Israel had wanted to install on the Golan in the case of a pull-back, and which Syria strongly opposed.

Rabinovich Says al-Asad 'Interested in Peace'

TA3012130395 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0805 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Report on interview with Israeli Ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich by Beni Avni on 29 December; place not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Avni] [passage omitted] Itamar Rabinovich has held many contacts with the Syrians in Washington. In an interview with Qol Yisra'el yesterday, Rabinovich described the differences:

[Rabinovich] It is noticeable that the Syrian delegation came with a desire to break the ice and establish a personal touch, which is a precondition whenever two former enemies decide to make peace.

[Avni] One Israeli source said that although the sides dealt with content, this was done in a very preliminary way. Even if issues such as the depth of the withdrawal and the depth of peace were brought up, this was done superficially.

Rabinovich said it is too early to say whether there is any change in the Syrian position. However, he did not agree with commentaries in the U.S. media claiming that al-Asad is still not prepared for real peace and that Syria is only trying to please the Americans in order to have its name lifted from the list of terror supporting countries and have it inscribed instead on the list of those receiving aid:

[Rabinovich] Some people claim that al-Asad is interested in the peace process rather than in peace itself. I do not accept this. I believe he is interested in peace, albeit a peace which is defined according to the Syrian view. [passage omitted]

[Avni] Over the weekend informal contacts will continue with the Americans. Despite the general optimism, the time has not come yet for an Israeli-Syrian dialogue which is free of U.S. a presence:

[Rabinovich] This move cannot be pursued by coercion. From day one we told Syria we believe it is desirable, but both sides should regard it as their joint interest. I am convinced it will come, but it has to develop naturally.

[Avni] Meanwhile, yesterday the ambassador had to explain to the Americans the aims of the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] attack in south Lebanon. Incidentally, the arrangement in Lebanon has still not been raised in the discussions. Rabinovich claims that at this stage we are still trying to ascertain whether we have a partner to work with. He certainly left the meetings feeling that such a partner indeed exists, but he does not believe, for example, that the two sides will formulate a joint

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working paper or any other official document at the end of the present round of talks:

[Rabinovich] We do not want to set targets and objectives for ourselves which may develop their own dynamics and become an end in themselves. At each stage we will decide what is appropriate for that point in time.

[Avni] The ambassador nevertheless did say it is possible that Syria may formulate positions which will be acceptable to Israel, and this is certainly an optimistic statement.

Rabinovich: Decisions Held for Christopher Visit

TA0201072296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0505 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Walid al-Mu'allim, head of the Syrian delegation to the talks, said in an interview with the Syrian news agency that last week's talks were useful and important, but that no agreement was reached between the delegations. Hayim Zissowitz asked Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich, a member of the Israeli delegation, if the Syrian negotiator's description was accurate.

[Begin recording] [Rabinovich] The description is accurate, and that's one Israeli-Syrian agreement, but it should not necessarily be seen as a negative development, because we built a three-stage scenario, and we have only completed the first stage. We are realistically looking at secretary of state's visit to the region, which is due to start on 10 January, as the point where agreements should start being worked out.

[Zissowitz] Does that mean that no breakthroughs or agreements are expected in the 3-5 January round?

[Rabinovich] We would be pleasantly surprised if we discover on Wednesday or Thursday that we have agreed on some important point of principle, but as things go, the moment a scenario is built in a certain way, the decisionmakers — especially those in Syria — hold any decision for the secretary of state's visit. I think the stage of decisionmaking and agreements will take place during the secretary of state's visit.

[Zissowitz] I would like to ask you if the Iranian issue and Syrian-Iranian ties were raised in the first stage of the talks last week?

[Rabinovich] Not in a clear-cut way, but in at least some of the talks, various regional issues were raised, and from that point of view, all the issues touching on the region in one way or another were scanned or were put on the negotiating table.

[Zissowitz] Among other things, proposals were raised in the first round to transfer the talks to a site closer and more strategically and tactically accessible to both sides, probably somewhere in Europe. If the Syrians agree to that, will you continue participating with the Israeli negotiating team?

[Rabinovich] If the secretary of state's visit goes well and certain agreements are reached which enable more intensive and more encompassing negotiations, then the issue of venue will be raised, possibly in the United States or somewhere closer to the region. That development has still not taken place, but if it occurs, I will consult with the prime minister and foreign minister, and then decide on my ability to continue participating in the negotiations. [end recording]

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 0505 GMT quotes Uri Savir, head of the Israeli negotiating team, as saying that "the Syrian representatives were determined to make progress toward peace, but Israel expects Damascus to make more concrete concessions. He noted that Israel is offering Syria an agreement that will permit both states to benefit from the economic fruits of peace. Uri Savir and Ambassador Rabinovich conferred yesterday with the Egyptian and Jordanian ambassadors in Washington and gave them details on the progress of the talks."]

Talks Said Based on Premise of Full Withdrawal

TA3112094795 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 31 Dec 95 p 7

[Report by political correspondent Shim'on Schiffer]

[FBIS Translated Text] Professor Itamar Rabinovich, Israel's ambassador to the United States, may soon resign from the negotiations with Syria.

YEDI'OT AHARONOT has learned that Savir's appointment as the prime minister's representative at the negotiations and the possibility that the talks may be moved to the Middle East have led Rabinovich to decide to withdraw from the negotiations and focus on running the embassy in Washington.

Meanwhile, high-ranking political sources said yesterday that the Israeli-Syrian talks in Maryland proceeded on the premise that Israel has consented to withdraw from all of the Golan Heights. According to these sources, the Americans informed the Syrians that the late Prime Minister Rabin had decided on a withdrawal from the Golan and, therefore, the issue was not raised at all in the recent talks.

Sources who had been close to Rabin said, however, that he had not given the Americans a clear and unequivocal commitment regarding the withdrawal from the Golan. The sources described Rabin's stands as follows: "He

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did and did not give it to the Syrians." They noted that Peres and his aides have wronged the late prime minister in the way they have been giving out information about Rabin's stands on the negotiations with the Syrians bit by bit.

Peres derives his information, among other sources, from reports he received from Chief of Staff Amnon Shahaq and Major General Dani Yatom, Rabin's aide-de-camp, as soon as he assumed office. The two officers informed Peres that they had been authorized to discuss the Syrian reaction to an Israeli withdrawal to the Sea of Galilee waterfront and to the alternative option of Israel's remaining on the Golan Heights promontories.

'Secret Meetings' Said Slated Before Next Round

TA3012184995 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The representatives of the Syrian and Israeli delegations will hold a series of secret meetings in Washington at the beginning of next week, even before the formal resumption of the talks on 3 January.

Our correspondent 'Imanu'el Rosen notes that at the end of the first week of talks with the Syrian delegation at the Wye Plantation in Maryland, Syria is still refusing to renew the officers' talks and seeks to put them off until a later stage.

What then has been achieved up to this point? Prime Minister Shim'on Peres may soon publicly recognize Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. This, after the Israeli team reached the conclusion that Syria is prepared to move quickly toward a full peace treaty and normalization with Israel. [passage omitted]

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Algeria

President Relieves Prime Minister Sifi of Duties

LD3112112195 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1100 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A statement released by the office of the presidency of the republic reports that President Liamine Zeroual today received Prime Minister Mokdad Sifi and relieved him of his duties. [passage omitted]

President Zeroual appointed Sifi minister of state at the president's office.

Appoints Ouyahia Head of Government

LD3112122995 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in French 1100 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The president of the republic has relieved the Sifi government of its duties, as was expected.

He has named Sifi as minister of state at the presidency and also named Ahmed Ouyahia as the new head of government.

Sifi was received this morning by the president of the republic at the end of the extended period in government decided on by the president on 27 November. This was an opportunity for Liamine Zeroual to pay particular homage to the selfless efforts made by the government under Sifi's leadership in the service of national recovery.

Another audience with the president of the republic was accorded to Ahmed Ouyahia, who has just been named head of the government. These are new developments but do not come as a great surprise. Here is Chedli Boufaroua:

[Boufaroua] Yes, it is no great surprise that Mokdad Sifi and his government has, on 31 December, seen the end of their mission. As you may remember, Mokdad Sifi had already resigned on the day Liamine Zeroual came to office. He was brought back for an extended period in office until the end of the year in progress, to use the words in the presidency's communique.

It, therefore, comes as no surprise that this government has been relieved of its duties, just as it comes as no surprise that Mokdad Sifi has been named minister of state attached to the presidency and will probably carry out missions given him by the president. [passage omitted]

New Prime Minister on 'Special and Difficult' Tasks

LD0201082596 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 0600 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In his first statement to the national press, new Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia has declared that the phase through which Algeria is passing is a special and difficult phase and the tasks of the prime minister are, similarly, special and difficult.

Mr. Ouyahia added that the national reform process must continue.

[Begin Ouyahia recording] Naturally, leading the government and ensuring the coordination of government work is by itself a difficult task, yet I would say it is made more difficult by special circumstances, among which is the phase Algeria is currently going through; it is a special phase with an important national reform course that must continue. Second, there are the aspirations of the great Algerian people, who have provided evidence of their quality and are naturally awaiting a response from the officials in charge of handling their affairs. Third, and no less weighty, is the task of succeeding Mr. Sifi, a brother and comrade who has exerted a special effort for the last 20 months at the head of the government team and has provided a lesson in honesty, commitment, and sacrifice. I hope God Almighty will enable us to follow his course. [end recording]

Imam Assassinated in Constantine Mosque

LD3112190495 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Mr. Sassi Lamouri, the religious affairs minister, received with extreme sorrow and grief the news of the assassination of the late Boumaza Zidane, about 62 years old, the Imam at Sidi M'Sid Mosque, in Constantine, during the morning prayers, who was the victim of treachery and criminality. [passage omitted]

Security Forces Kill 100 'Armed Islamists'

LD0101182596 Paris Radio France International in French 1730 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In Algeria, the daily "Horizons" reports that some 100 armed Islamists were killed by the armed forces last week in an operation which is believed to have lasted two days in Bougara, some 25 km southeast of Algiers.

The newspaper did not give further details about the way the operation was conducted or about possible casualties on the armed forces' side.

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It added, however, that armed Islamists planted a bomb inside the hospital in Bougara some time over the last few days, and they reportedly destroyed TV sets with axes in several houses.

Egypt

UN Secretary General Butrus-Ghali Pays Visit

Comments on Yemen-Eritrea Dispute

NC3112085295 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic 0610 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Telephone interview with UN Secretary General Butrus-Ghali, in Sanaa, by Muhammad al-Aswad, in Cairo; date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [al-Aswad] Dr. Butrus-Ghali, your current visit to Sanaa was scheduled before the eruption of the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea over the al-Hanish al-Kabir island in the Red Sea. Did this dispute and its repercussions change the nature of your mission in Sanaa?

[Butrus-Ghali] This dispute did not change my mission, however, I talked with the Yemeni president, prime minister, and foreign minister about this dispute. I will leave for Asmara to meet with the Eritrean president. The United Nations is prepared to offer its good efforts to contain the dispute and settle it peacefully. I hope that a settlement will be reached through bilateral or regional contacts. The United Nation's mission is to help those seeking a peaceful settlement.

[Al-Aswad] Can we gather that there is a UN initiative to mediate the dispute between Sanaa and Asmara?

[Butrus-Ghali] There is no initiative unless both parties ask the United Nations to undertake an initiative. The United Nations cannot intervene or mediate unless both parties agree.

[Al-Aswad] You offered on behalf of the United Nations to mediate in the dispute and stipulated that both parties agree to a peaceful solution. After your talks in Sanaa, have you sensed a positive response by Yemen?

[Butrus-Ghali] Yemen accepts any mediation effort for a peaceful settlement. However, I must listen to the views of the Eritrean party. I will learn the views of the Eritrean party during my visit to Asmara.

[Al-Aswad] As you leave for Asmara, what ideas do you have to resolve the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute?

[Butrus-Ghali] I will only offer the United Nation's readiness to contribute to settling the dispute if both parties agree. The United Nations prefer that a settlement is reached on the regional or bilateral level.

[Al-Aswad] Ethiopia and Egypt are starting mediation efforts between Eritrea and Yemen. How does the United Nations view these efforts?

[Butrus-Ghali] The United Nations welcomes the Ethiopian and Egyptian mediation efforts. The United Nations does not monopolize settlement of international disputes. The United Nations prefer settling international disputes on the regional or bilateral level. The United Nations is ready to participate. If the dispute cannot be settled on the regional or bilateral level, the United Nations can serve as a court of appeal and play a role in settling the dispute. [passage omitted]

Meets With Mubarak

NC0201110596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0958 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Cairo, 2 Jan (MENA) — UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus-Ghali has stated that during their meeting today he briefed President Husni Mubarak on the most important topics being handled by the UN, including the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea. He added: I told President Mubarak that both countries have the political will to settle this matter by peaceful means and as soon as possible. He expressed optimism that a peaceful solution to this dispute will be found soon.

Dr. Butrus-Ghali added that he had also briefed President Mubarak on the UN's role in the sanctions imposed on Iraq, Security Council Resolution 986, and the importance of implementing that resolution for a partial lifting of the sanctions imposed on Iraq. The resolution, he added, allows Iraq to sell its oil and use the proceeds to buy food and medicine for the Iraqi people. Through this sale, he added, we can also compensate thousands of workers harmed by the war, including Egyptian workers. He noted that the UN had set up a committee in Geneva to assess the workers' losses and determine reparations for them; however, the committee does not have sufficient funds to do so. It could obtain these funds by receiving a percentage of the proceeds of the oil sold by Iraq. [passage omitted]

Mubarak Comments on Peace Process, 'Terrorism'

NC3112202995 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1510 GMT 31 Dec 95

["Text" of President Mubarak's statement to the BBC; place and date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. I begin by extending thanks and appreciation to all those who participated in the opinion poll about the 1995 harvest.

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The year was full of events in our region. They are inseparable events because they are interwoven and intricate. This is clear in the issues put forward to the public and intellectuals who took part in this referendum, such as the peace process, confronting terrorism, and the Addis Ababa attack.

The advocates of peace are the very ones who confront terrorism and the ones who reject the Addis Ababa attack. The attack was one of the links in the chain of terrorism that seeks to frustrate peace. The peace we are working for is a just and comprehensive peace that will secure the nations' national, legitimate rights in full. If peace itself is a goal, the post-peace era is more important in my view. Opting to follow the road to peace by the majority of the world's Arab people means that the Arab individual has realized his path and defined his goal. Here came Egypt's role and mine to express their hope in achieving the desired peace.

My belief in a just peace as a man and my conviction of peace as an Arab leader has truly formed within me because I knew the meaning of war through my experience and participation in several wars when I served in the Armed Forces. I knew very well that war destroys the infrastructure built by the nations' sweat. I knew how a mother loses her child and how a wife loses her husband. I experienced moments of pain, the pain of losing friends and colleagues and the grief of the martyrs' sons, brothers, and fathers, therefore, I always reiterate that peace is a precious thing and deserves all sacrifices.

Perhaps we remember that a few years back, the hope for peace was nearly lost. I then said that Arab rights and the Middle East became the no issues. We said no to every solution and whenever any development regarding peace occurred we said no; therefore, I called the Middle East question the issue of lost opportunities. I fully realized how we have lost opportunities since 1948, since the partition [of Palestine], but I did not despair because of my faith in peace. I knew very well that the entire Arab nation was with me after Egypt achieved its peace through war, negotiations, and legal arbitration.

We achieved our peace in three ways: the October war, negotiations, and legal arbitration on Taba in the final stage. As the largest Arab country, Egypt employed all its capabilities, all its influence, and all its contacts with its Arab brothers. It used its ties with Israel and friendship with the peace-sponsoring countries. All this was for peace, and frankly, the road was very rough, full of thorns, and fraught with dangers, but our determination was stronger.

We made every effort with the Palestinians because the Palestinian issue is the cornerstone, the original problem of the Middle East, the core of the conflict, and the most important link in the Middle East issue. Actually, the Palestinians are the ones who most need someone to stand by their side because they have no land and no entity.

I was very pleased with the transition from one phase to another through an intense effort shared by the U.S. President and his Administration and by a number of friendly countries. I was pleased when I walked with Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat as he made the first step on Palestinian land to enter the Gaza Strip and when the Declaration of Principles was signed. This also was the case when I saw the Palestinian people a few days ago in major Palestinian cities celebrating Israel's withdrawal and the imposition of the Palestinian Authority's sovereignty over Nabulus, Bethlehem, Janin, Tulkarm, and other major Palestinian cities.

The land and rights have been returned to their owners. At the time, I contacted 'Arafat when he was in Bethlehem and congratulated him because what we see today, Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, is something no one imagined.

However, the road to peace is still hard and needs concerted efforts by all parties. In fact, no one is able to pursue peace, except the strong.

The year 1995 witnessed the culmination of peace efforts with the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace accord. It also witnessed the fall of Yitzhaq Rabin at the hands of the enemies of peace. A new climate prevails these days and there is optimism, especially about the current ongoing talks between Syria and Israel near Washington.

This is what concerns peace. As for terrorism, the primary element that achieved success in confronting and defeating terrorism was the Egyptian nation, which rejects violence and crime. The Egyptian nation, which is aware and conscious of the fact that these terrorists exploit religion and use it as a cloak to hide their evils and [word indistinct].

My method has been one of confrontation and openness. Egypt is a democratic state enjoying freedom of opinion, press, and media. All these have been sharp weapons to uncover terrorism and its schemes. The state was successful in defeating terrorism without compromising democracy and without violating the provisions of the Constitution and the law. Egypt sought to preserve the people's right to a safe life.

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The people were not deceived by the false claims that terrorism and planners of terrorism tried to utter, nor by the many rumors they disseminated. The people were not deceived by the terrorists' use of some foreign media podiums to disseminate these rumors and exploit the communications revolution in one way or another to falsify an image that never expressed their magnitude and actual weight.

The state has decided to press ahead with confronting extremism and terrorism. In my view, the state is the people and the executive, legislative, and judicial authorities. When I say the nation, I mean all the people, foremost of whom are the intellectuals and opinion makers. When I mention the authorities, I really mean all the state's security, cultural, and media agencies, as well as the fair and lofty Egyptian judiciary.

First and foremost I thank God for the failure of the attempted attack on me in Addis Ababa which aimed to hit and frustrate the peace process. I also thank God for the people's stance against terrorism although I have a firm belief that in the pursuit of principles life is cheap. I also have a firm belief that anyone who assumes a leadership role risks his life for the sake of his country and nation.

I enjoy the support of my fellow countrymen, the Arab nation, and all friends worldwide. This was evident in the several days following my return from Addis Ababa. This support and that condemnation represented a denunciation of terrorism and a blow to the enemies of peace. Thank you.

'Militants' Say Mubarak Tops 1996 'Hit List'

NC0101115996 Paris AFP in English
1117 GMT 1 Jan 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Jan 1 (AFP) - Islamic militants put Egyptian President Husni Mubarak at the top of their hit list for 1996, vowing to make it the year of their "glorious victory."

But Mubarak said Egypt had managed to "crush terrorism."

The al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah [Islamic Group] "crowned its operations for 1995 with an heroic operation" in the southern town of Abu Qurqas, the group said in a statement sent to an international news agency on Sunday night.

It said the attack on a police car that killed two policemen, including a lieutenant colonel, and a passer-by "came just hours before the end of 1995 and the start of 1996, the year of glorious victory" for al-Jama'ah.

The group's priority for the New Year was "to liquidate" Mubarak, followed by Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif, Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi, and state security chief General Ahmad al-'Adli.

The president, meanwhile, said in an interview with BBC radio that Islamic militants had exploited the media to spread lies and give a false impression of the threat they posed.

Police went on alert in Cairo and at tourist sites in southern Egypt on Sunday to counter possible attack by militants on New Year's Eve.

For the first time since the launch of their campaign of violence against the government in March 1992, Cairo itself was spared attacks in 1995. Since late 1994, al-Jama'ah strikes have been restricted to southern provinces.

But the militants have also struck abroad, notably a bomb attack on the Egyptian embassy that killed 17 people in November. Mubarak escaped unscathed from an assassination bid in Addis Ababa in June claimed by the al-Jama'ah.

MENA Reports Death of 3 in al-Minya Shootout

NC3112152395 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1420 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 31 Dec (MENA) — Three people, including a police officer and a conscript, died and eight others, including a little girl, were wounded in a new crime committed by terrorists in Markaz Abu Qurqas in al-Minya Governorate, Upper Egypt, this morning.

A responsible source at the Egyptian Interior Ministry said that while Lieutenant Colonel Husayn al-Wardani Ibrahim of the Markaz Abu Qurqas unit passed by the western ambush force on the farm road west of Abu Qurqas City at about 0730 today, unidentified persons randomly fired at his car. He and conscript Muhammad Fakhri of the al-Minya Security Directorate force were martyred as a result.

Conscripts Mahmud Muhammad Ibrahim, Ahmad al-Shabrakhiti Hassan, Jamal Kamal Muhammad, and 'Arafat Ahmad Muhammad were wounded in the incident. Several people who happened to be at the scene of the incident were also wounded. They are Hasan Mahfuz Hasan, Jad Hammam Hasan, Mustafa 'Ali Hasan, and a small girl named Hibah Salih Jum'ah. The wounded were immediately taken to the hospital for treatment.

As they fled, the assailants shot and killed citizen Muhammad Sa'd al-Jazzar from Sfay in Markaz Abu Qurqas.

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Al-Minya Security Directorate commanders, officials in various search units, and criminal laboratory experts went to check the scene of the incident. Police agencies are working to track down and arrest the culprits. The prosecution has been notified to begin its investigation.

Libya

Al-Qadhdhafi Comments on Italy, World Leaders

LD3112123995 Rome RAI Radio Uno Network in Italian 0700 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The missile attack against Lampedusa [Italian island attacked by Libya in 1986] was justified, and even the NATO base in Naples could have been hit. Italy does nothing to help Libya end its international isolation. This was said by Colonel AL-Qadhdhafi in an interview given in his tent in the desert, taking advantage of the presence of several Italian journalists covering a football tournament.

The dictator of Tripoli repeated serious accusations against American Presidents Bush and Reagan. He used softer words for Bill Clinton, and criticized also [Cuban President] Fidel Castro, [Palestinian leader] Yasir 'Arafat and [Iraqi President] Saddam Husayn. As far as Italy is concerned, al-Qadhdhafi repeated his request for a conclusion to the controversy over war damages, obviously in favor of his country; however, it was an interview in the colonel's style, leaving the impression of a man alone, isolated from international realities.

Foreign Secretary Receives Kim Chong-il Message

LD0101173596 Tripoli JANA in English 1426 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tripoli, Ay Annar [January] 1, JAMAHIRIYAH NEWS AGENCY — The secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation last night met in Tripoli with the North Korean ambassador to the Great Jamahiriyah.

The ambassador delivered to the secretary a present for the leader of the revolution from President [as received] Kim Chong-il of North Korea as an expression of existing firm friendship between the two friendly countries which foundations were consolidated by the leader of the revolution and the late President Kim Il-song.

Also the ambassador conveyed during this meeting the greetings of the president of North Korea to the leader of the revolution and his good wishes to the Libyan Arab people for progress and lauded the firm stances of the Great Jamahiriyah in support of the unity of the Korean people.

'Virtual Closure' of Border With Egypt Reported

MM2912133995 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 28 Dec 95 p 1

[Report by Mahmud Muhammad in Marsa Matruh (Egypt) and AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in London: "Despairing of Lifting Blockade Soon, Libya Freezes Its Agreements and 'Virtually' Closes Its Borders With Egypt"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Libya is presently headed toward a virtual closure of its borders with both Tunisia and Egypt and strengthening its relations with Iraq and Sudan, after having completely despaired of having the blockade lifted soon, following the [U.S.] Congress' decision to tighten it.

AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI has learned from sources close to the Libyan leadership that Libya has unilaterally frozen a security agreement with Egypt and has informed the Egyptian Government of its decision.

The above-mentioned agreement requires the mutual extradition of all wanted politicians and oppositionists between the two countries. This agreement was ratified following the defection to Libya of a large number of Islamic extremists wanted by the Egyptian Government in connection with security cases.

Libyan sources have said that the freezing of the agreement was intended to let Egypt know that Libya is no longer bound by it, and that, in future, it will not hand over any wanted persons. This message may be intended to incite wanted Islamists to use Libya as a base for their moves against the Egyptian Government.

Libya has actually started to close the border with Egypt, and trade has seen a huge decrease due to the high taxes imposed by the Libyan authorities on Egyptian goods destined for Egypt [as published]. These taxes exceed 100 percent [of the value of the goods].

The Libyans say that the majority of these goods which merchants carry to Egypt and Tunisia are scarce and cost the Libyan authorities tens of millions of dollars. It seems that the Libyan authorities have undertaken these steps having despaired that Egyptian President Husni Mubarak will keep his promises to use his relationship with the United States to seek the lifting of the blockade on Libya. The U.S. Congress' decision to tighten the blockade was the last straw in relations between the two countries [Libya and Egypt].

The Libyan authorities have started to prepare Libyan public opinion for new U.S. steps in this context, such as imposing a total oil embargo, especially following reports that oil companies operating in Libya, such as Agip (Italian), Total (French), and Repsol (Spanish),

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have initiated contacts with some Gulf states including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for alternative oil supplies at prices similar to the Libyan prices, should the United Nations issue a resolution imposing an oil embargo on Libya.

News reports from Tripoli say that there has been no official decision to close the borders with Tunisia and Egypt, but that instead it will be implemented, in effect, over two months. There are those, however, who say that these reports are being leaked only as a threat and to encourage the Egyptian Government to review its current policy toward Libya.

The Libyan leadership is trying to offset the eventual loss of [relations with] its neighbors Egypt and Tunisia by opening up toward Iraq, and has undertaken its first steps in this context by sending Transport Secretary 'Izz-al-Din al-Hinshiri to Baghdad at the head of a Libyan delegation to participate in the joint higher commission's meetings.

Libyan sources have said that the most important item agreed at this meeting is to boost scientific and technical cooperation in the field of military and agricultural sciences between the two sides, and to provide job opportunities in Libya for many Iraqi experts, so that they feel secure and do not have to take refuge in European or American states.

The Egyptian city of Marsa Matruh is now almost a ghost town after being a center teeming with life and a transit point for goods between Libya and Egypt, following measures taken by Tripoli aimed at reducing commercial activity between the two countries.

Muhammad al-'Adl, customs chief at the Egyptian border point of al-Sallum, said that "5,000 travelers used to cross the border daily, whereas now a maximum of only 500 people do." [passage omitted]

Tourist Shipping Links Restored With Malta

LD3112155095 Tripoli JANA in English 1416 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tripoli, al-Kanun [December] 31, JAMAHIRYAH NEWS AGENCY — Responding to a call by the government of the friendly Republic of Malta to maintain travel movement between the two friendly countries and Malta's assurance to guarantee the safety and security of the Libyan nationals on the Maltese territory, the National General Company for Maritime Transport announces the resumption of the daily maritime tourist line between the two countries on national passenger and tourist ships as from 1/1/ 1996 and in accordance with the previous daily timetable of this line.

General People's Committee Holds Meeting

LD0101220796 Tripoli Libyan Television Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The General People's Committee today began holding its second meeting for the year of 1424 at the People's Hall in the city of al-Zawiyah. The agenda of the Committee contains several points including a review of the minutes of the first meeting which was held on 10 October and to follow up its implementation and to review the decisions which had been taken according to the minutes of the meetings of the Secretariat of the General People's Committee in its 16-19 meetings for the year of 1424 and the sub-point relating to the report of the committee charged, according to the decision of the General People's Committee No. 284 for the year of 1424, to lay down the necessary arrangements regarding the budgets of the of the people's committees of the basic people's conferences.

The agenda also includes a general report on the work of the qualitative general people's committees during the period 1423-24 and which has been presented to the basic people's conferences, and the report of the national data and documentation authority regarding its activities, and especially with regard to some information and results deduced from the general census. The agenda also contains a report on the following up of the implementation of the general budget for the financial year 1424 and a review of the draft budget of the financial year 1425, and a memorandum on the financing of the project of the Great-Man-Made River and to utilize its waters, and a memorandum on the subject of the law of the repayment of the public loans, and also a letter from the General People's Committee for Education and Scientific Research regarding the Jamahiri Youth and Sports General Authority, and any other business.

Morocco

King Hassan Receives Message From Yemeni President

LD2912191895 Rabat Moroccan Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] This afternoon at the Royal Palace in Marrakech, His Majesty King Hassan II received Yahya al-'Arashi, the minister of culture and tourism of the Republic of Yemen, who was accompanied by 'Abd-al-Wahhab al-Shawkani, the Yemeni ambassador in Rabat.

During the meeting, the Yemeni minister conveyed to his majesty the king a personal message from Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, the president of the Republic of Yemen.

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Abdellatif Filali, the prime minister and foreign affairs and cooperation minister, and his majesty's advisors Driss Slaoui and Abdelhadi Boutaleb attended the meeting.

Basri: Islamist Leader Yassine Under Protection

LD2912144795 Rabat MAP in English 1237 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rabat, Dec. 29 (MAP) — The leader of the Islamist association "al Adl wa al-Ihsane" (Justice and Welfare), Abdessalam Yassine, "is not under house arrest" but he is rather "under protection" Moroccan state minister for the interior, Driss Basri, said Wednesday [27 December]. Answering a question by opposition MPs during the weekly question time at the parliament on the lifting of the house arrest imposed on Abdessalam Yassine, Basri explained "it is a protection and a preventive measure inherent to a pending instruction".

Many Moroccan papers have circulated news lately on the lifting of the house arrested imposed on the leader of "al-Adl wa al-Ihsane" since 1990. Basri recalled that a judiciary investigation was opened against some elements of the association chaired by Abdessalam Yassine. These elements, who proved to be guilty of acts harming public order, were tried and sentenced to jail terms, he said, adding that the investigation is still open, concerning other persons, including Yassine.

The minister added that the request expressed by some MPs concerning the lifting of the house arrest was "welcomed" by the public powers, which undertook approaches to get informed on the reality before the adoption of any measure in this regard.

Basri went on to say that Abdessalam Yassine, who was used to leave his house, pay visits to his cousins, doctors and friends, and receive representatives of humanitarian and political organizations, went beyond the traditional rituals during the Friday prayers of Dec. 15. Abdessalam yassine had told an official delegation that visited him that he did not ask for the intervention of any political organization in his favor and that he was "at ease in his situation". He underlined that the authorities should allow him to make of his association "a political party, with Islam as its basic foundation", Basri said.

Yassine, Basri added, also told his interlocutors that his association "is a political force that aspires to the status of a political party". He also deemed opposition parties, particularly the Istiqlal Party and the Socialist Union of Popular Forces "as mere political enterprises which seek to take power through what they call alternation". The interior minister recalled that articles 19, 3 and 17 of the Constitution ban such an objective.

Police Break Up Student Demonstration in Rabat

LD2912201495 Paris Radio France International in French 1830 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In Morocco, the police have broken up a demonstration by university students in the capital, Rabat. The students were protesting against the National Education Ministry's failure to honor a promise that it will employ 70 graduates.

Parliament Speaker on Need To Recover Ceuta, Melilla

LD2912161295

[FBIS Editorial Report] Rabat Moroccan Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic at 1300 GMT on 29 December broadcasts a 19-minute recorded speech by Mohamed Jalal Essaid, speaker of the House of Representatives, to parliament at the end of its current session on 28 December. In the speech Essaid stresses Morocco's territorial integrity with refe: :nce to the Western Sahara in the south and Ceuta and Melilla in the north. He also regrets the diplomatic moves of a neighboring Arab state which, he avers, are against right and legitimacy.

Essaid begins by recalling the activities of parliament during the first half of the current year. He also recalls the main points raised by King Hassan in a speech at the opening of this session.

Without referring directly to Algeria's recent stance on the Western Sahara issue, Essaid says: "We note with regret that the diplomatic moves of a country with which we have historical, Arab, neighborliness and Islamic ties are going in a direction which is contrary to right and which splits the ranks and opposes Morocco in its firm rights with an erroneous logic that pays no attention whatsoever to legitimacy and takes no notice of the announced treaties and commitments. This kind of behavior can only sharpen our determination and consolidate our strength and capability to face up to challenges."

Essaid then reviews the activities of the various permanent committees and stresses Morocco's attachment to its territorial integrity. He also hails the spirit of cooperation and understanding between the deputies and the government during debates. Essaid goes on to list the bills which parliament discussed during the session. The speaker of the House of Representatives also recalls the creation of a fact-finding committee to investigate drug trafficking related questions.

Noting that the House of Representatives has also devoted its attention to a number of international issues, Essaid says: "The diplomatic action undertaken by our house is fundamentally aimed at defending our fateful

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and vital issues foremost among which is the issue of our territorial integrity which is the object of our special and continuous attention. If Morocco stood firmly in the face of the enemies of this integrity for 20 years, then we are today called upon to be more cautious and vigilant in the footsteps of His Majesty King Hassan II, may God make him victorious, to face up to some people's attempts to impose settlements outside the framework of the UN plan.

"We stress, as His Majesty said in his speech on the recent anniversary of the [Green] March, that if the peace plan is not respected then we do not want a referendum. We are already in our Sahara in God's peace and protection and each one of us is living within the framework of law, peace of mind, prosperity and democratic rights for individuals and groups. Moreover, we are living with hope and faith. We are also called upon, out of the message we are carrying, to work and fight for the recovery of the two Moroccan towns, Ceuta and Melilla, and putting an end to an occupation which appears nowadays to be against the current of events and developments and also against the movement of history."

The speaker then recalls the contribution of parliament to the talks with the European Union and Morocco's regrets at the announcement of the transfer of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, and he says that the issue will be raised at the next meeting of the Arab parliamentarian union in Amman. Essaid concludes by calling on all the parliament's groups to prepare themselves for the next session and he thanks everybody for their hard work.

Sudan

Al-Turabi Blames Crisis With Neighbors on U.S.

NC0201122296 Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 27 Dec 95 p 1

[Report by Ghassan Makhal in Khartoum]

[FBIS Translated Text] Sudanese leader Dr. Hasan al-Turabi believes that the crisis in his country's relations with many of its neighbors is due to a U.S. decision as part of Washington's policy to tighten the noose on Sudan. He hinted that Sudan, which had brought the ruling forces to power in several countries south of Sudan, is capable of replacing them with other forces. Al-Turabi ruled out that things would reach the point of a military confrontation with Egypt. He expressed his belief that the current crisis with Cairo is part of a "historical" crisis between the two countries. He noted that Egypt considers Sudan a "barbarian" country, however, it is jealous of Sudan because Sudan has surpassed Egypt in its adherence to Islam.

In an interview with AL-SAFIR held in Khartoum on Thursday [21 December], Dr. al-Turabi said that Sudan is witnessing social transformations and an economic renaissance. He noted that the democracy that Sudan follows is real democracy. He stressed that former Sudanese Prime Minister al-Sadiq al-Mahdi and John Garang, leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, can run in the coming parliamentary or presidential elections early next year.

Al-Turabi expressed his disappointment with the current relations between Sudan and both Libya and Iran. He expressed similar disappointment with the Arabs' reluctance to invest in his country. He noted that the United States policy toward Sudan is to exploit it as a reservoir of petroleum and mineral resources to be used in the future after the other Arab oil countries' resources are completely used up.

Al-Turabi reiterated his rejection of peace with Israel, but he noted that Sudan does not wish to get involved in conflicts with other Arab countries, however, he called on Islamic, fundamentalist, and nationalist forces to remain faithful to their principles.

Border Incidents With Ethiopia Said To Leave 40 Dead

NC3012160795 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1455 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Khartoum, 30 Dec (MENA) — A MENA correspondent in Khartoum has learned from Sudanese sources that Sudan's eastern border with Ethiopia has witnessed provocations between the Sudanese and Ethiopian sides in the past two days. These sources said that these provocations left 40 Sudanese dead; however, these sources did not indicate if these dead were from the Armed Forces, the Popular Defense Forces, or civilians. The causes of these provocations are not known, nor is it known whether there were losses on the Ethiopian side.

It is worth noting that great tension has prevailed along the Sudanese-Ethiopian borders since October following Ethiopian accusations against Sudan of complicity in the attempt to assassinate President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, the border dispute over the border area of al-Fashqah [as transliterated], and the Ethiopian support for the Sudanese opposition forces led by 'Abd-al-'Aziz Khalid. It is reported that the Ethiopian Government supports Khalid by ignoring his activities which confuses the Sudanese military's plans.

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Islamic Front's Involvement in Attack on Mubarak Viewed

NC0101100696 Cairo MENA in English 0915 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Khartoum, Jan 1 — (MENA) — Press reports in the Sudanese capital unveiled new information about the participation of elements of Hasan al-Turabi front in planning and implementing the attempt on the life of President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June.

"AL-MAYDAN" magazine, mouthpiece of the Sudanese Communist Party, said Sudanese security and intelligence bodies smuggled three Sudanese terrorists who took part in the Addis Ababa attack out of Ethiopia and transported them back home despite the fact what they had been injured by bullets fired by Ethiopian police.

The first terrorist was Hashim Muhammad Jad-al-Mawla, who died of his wounds one hour after being admitted to hospital, the magazine said. The second was al-Tayyib Muhammad 'Abd-al-Rahim, who was treated in hospital and after being discharged was moved to an unknown destination and is threatened with body liquidation. The third terrorist was Muhammad Siraj, one of those who planned the attack and leader of the Addis Ababa group. He was admitted to hospital but managed to flee out of fear of being liquidated, the magazine added.

"AL-MAYDAN" magazine pointed out that the Sudanese authorities admitted the presence of Siraj in Sudan and claimed that they were searching for him and then they denied his entry in Sudan despite conflicting rumors about his arrest and his liquidation for possessing dangerous documents with details of the crime, uncovering the involvement of al-Turabi front leadership in the plot. After all this, and the proof of the Islamic Front's involvement in planning, implementing, and financing, terrorist operations in general and the Addis Ababa crime in particular, the al-Turabis still persist in their lies and keep wailing that others are against them for their Islamic tendencies, the magazine said.

Islamic Group Attacks Police; 8 Members Killed

EA0101182296 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1500 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Interior Ministry issued a statement today saying that a group of 19 people from Jabal Awliyah went to Kambu Ashara, west of Madani to persuade the inhabitants to embrace the ideas of atonement and exodus [al-Takfir wa'l-Hijrah group, an extremist puritanical Islamic sect]. The statement adds that the group used force and violence to coerce the inhabitants to give in to their demands. The statement adds that they attacked policemen and killed one of them with weapons other than firearms. They seized his weapon and some of the weapons belonging to the others. The members of the group then opened fire on the people. The statement adds that the police killed eight members of the group and wounded others. The statement said the situation has been contained, and that the aggressors are being investigated.

SPLM Rejects Call To Participate in Elections

NC3112183295 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1650 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Nairobi, 31 Dec (MENA) — The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement [SPLM] has rejected the invitation addressed by the Khartoum government to its leader Dr. John Garang to participate in the elections that will be held in the first quarter of 1996.

SPLM Information and Culture Secretary Bagan Amum [name and title as received] told MENA today that the SPLM regards the invitation addressed to Garang by the al-Bashir-al-Turabi regime as a political farce by an illegal government.

He declared that the National Islamic Front's regime came to power by a military coup d'etat against an elected democratic government; therefore, it does not have the legitimacy to call for elections especially as it has prohibited political party activity in the country and smothered liberties.

Amum pointed out that the SPLM clings to its demand that the ruling regime give up the power it usurped by force and hand it over to the Sudanese people. The SPLM, he pointed out, believes that it is necessary to form a transitional government in which all the Sudanese political forces are represented in line with the agreement reached by the parties that compose the opposition Democratic National Grouping [DNG] in their meeting in Asmara.

Amum said that the DNG leaders will hold a new meeting in Asmara on 8 January to discuss several organizational matters and ways of hastening the fall of the al-Bashir-al-Turabi regime.

Amum said that Dr. Garang will attend the part of the meeting that will deal with the military situation. He added that SPLM forces have repulsed an attack carried out by the government's forces against the Jabal Mundri area in Western Equatoria and inflicted heavy losses in men and equipment on the attacking forces.

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Bahrain

Opposition Figure Interviewed on Recent Incidents

NC3012191295 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1755 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Telephone interview with opposition leader Dr. Mansur al-Jamri by 'Isam Hasan; place and date not given—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Hasan] Dr. Mansur al-Jamri: News agencies have talked about disturbances in Bahrain in the wake of the closure of two mosques and there are other reports. Observers interpret these events as an escalation intended to strangle the powers that demanded a return to the Constitution. How do you assess the incidents?

[Al-Jamri] What is happening surprises political observers because everybody had the impression that the government in Bahrain was convinced that it could not live in constant hostility with the various sectors of the population. Hence, there were reconciliation attempts last August. It seems that the ruling establishment is coming under pressure to pursue a certain line that it might not want to pursue. There might be a wrong belief that the use of force might work. There might be a belief that a harsh blow to the opposition to prove the state's domination through old, conventional methods might be better to protect the state against losing and might preclude the opposition's success.

We believe that what happened yesterday provides clear evidence that the policy being pursued is wrong. In the past two weeks, loyalists of the different trends were assaulted and punished. There was the Sunni Islamist trend, represented by journalist Hafiz al-Shaykh, who was punished by interrogating and insulting him and then putting him on trial. He was released on 500-dinars bail. Moreover, the well-known nationalist figure Ahmad al-Shamlan was subjected to the same thing. They were followed by Shaykh Hasan Sultan, of the Shia Islamist trend.

Therefore, we believe that political oppression involves all. The people who put forward an initiative concerning the release of the detainees are among those particularly targeted. This initiative is now over. The opposition leaders are going through a stage of permanent political action, which is what terrified the authorities. The group who fulfilled the government's security demands was surprised to see the government going back on its promises. They were thus obliged to begin political action despite the government's rejection. The declared demands—the return of the Constitution and parliament and respect for freedom of expression and for individual and group rights—have now returned to the surface. This alarmed the security authorities, who attacked a large number of mosques. Mr. Ahmad Sallum [not further identified] was summoned, insulted, and detained for several days because the religious ceremonies he attends usually attract a huge audience. A number of mosques have been closed and religious ceremonies have been banned. This is a blatant assault on human rights and a violation of the Constitution, the human rights declaration, and all the charters that bind UN members.

What we see is that the old mentality is coming back to control the country. We are sure that public opinion will not be defeated. It will stand fast and obtain its rights.

[Hasan] Thank you Dr. Mansur al-Jamri.

[Al-Jamri] Thank you my brother.

Qatar

Former Amir Says 'Still Legal Amir' of Country

JN2912174995 Dubayy AL-BAYAN in Arabic 25 Dec 95 pp 1, 15

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Abu Dhabi — EMIRATES NEWS AGENCY — Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Hamad Al Thani, personal representative of Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Hamad Al Thani [the deposed amir of Qatar], expressed the appreciation of his highness the amir for the hospitality accorded to him by His Highness Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan, president of the sisterly United Arab Emirates.

Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Hamad Al Thani noted, in a press statement, that the objective of his highness the amir's current tour of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] states is to personally inform the leaders of these states that he is still legal amir of the State of Qatar.

Shaykh Muhammad added that Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Hamad Al Thani wants to reiterate to his brothers the members of the GCC Supreme Council that what came in his message to them is a firm fact; namely, he did not and will not step down under any circumstances and he will return to rule his dear country Qatar soon, God willing.

Shaykh Muhammad said that the events which took place in the Muscat summit aimed at driving a wedge in the Gulf ranks and at undermining Gulf unity and coherence. This, he added, prompted his highness the amir to make this tour in order to reaffirm to his brothers that he does not agree at all on what took place during the Muscat summit and that he, in his capacity as the legal amir of the State of Qatar, will cooperate with his brothers, the members of the GCC Supreme Council, to return Qatar to the Gulf ranks, as in the past.

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Shaykh Muhammad said that in light of the delicate circumstances, under which the region is passing, all will work to strengthen solidarity to achieve security and stability in our Gulf and Arab region. [passage omitted]

Comments on Ties With Bahrain, GCC

JN2912173595 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0735 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Manama, 29 Dec (WAKH)—His Highness Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Hamad Al Thani asserted that his country and the State of Bahrain maintain profound relations because of the kinship linking the two countries as two parts of one family.

Speaking last night to the chief editors of local newspapers and to the GULF NEWS AGENCY, His Highness Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Hamad Al Thani said that his relationship with his highness the amir of the State of Bahrain was very strong. [passage omitted]

Asked if Qatar abides by the policy of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], if it is going to return to the Gulf ranks, and if differences with Bahrain will remain within the one family, his highness said he had sent letters to the GCC leaders during their recent summit in Muscat explaining his views on all these issues. He added that everything would be okay, God willing, after his return home.

His highness also said his contacts with his brothers the GCC leaders went on even when he was in Europe.

He then commended Bahrain's media organs for coverage of his current visit to the State of Bahrain, noting the extensive media coverage his Gulf tour enjoyed. He also said that he wanted this media coverage to depict the essential objectives of his tour.

Saudi Arabia

King Fahd Hands Over Affairs of State to Crown Prince

LD0101122996 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, custodian of the two holy mosques, may God preserve him, has issued an order to His Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the crown prince.

The text of the order is as follows:

To His Royal Highness brother Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the crown prince, may God protect him. Peace and God's compassion and blessing be upon you.

Owing to our desire, with God's will, to spend some time in rest and recuperation and owing to the good qualities of your gracious highness and intense concern for the public interest, and after taking cognizance of Article 65 of the by-law of the system of government, we hereby entrust your highness by this order to undertake the affairs of the state while we enjoy rest and recuperation. We are fully confident of your highness's consideration to your brother and your intense concern for the state's interest and the service of the people's interest.

We beseech God to give your highness his assistance and success. We also beg him to help us and you and to guide everyone toward the things he loves and blesses. Peace and God's compassion and blessing be upon you.

Your brother Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Saud, monarch of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Crown Prince Accepts 'Task'

LD0101131896 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The custodian of the two holy mosques [King Fahd] has received the following reply from his highness the crown prince:

To my dear brother King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, monarch of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, may God preserve him.

May God's peace and mercy be upon you. Sir, no matter how much I try, I may not be able under these conditions to express my strong love and absolute loyalty to you, sir, and I may not be able to express to you what I hold for you in my heart, sir, hoping that God will grant you good health and long life to continue to lead our march for which I and every citizen are indebted to my brother.

The minor inconvenience which affected you has demonstrated the abundance of sentiments of love and loyalty from the people, who have been inquiring day and night about your health, may God preserve you. The clear evidence is the numerous calls I receive, from men and women, the media, and all the brothers inside and outside the Kingdom.

Sir, only God knows what my reactions were when I was informed of your gracious brotherly confidence in me, entrusting me with the management of the state's affairs on your behalf until we welcome you back, God willing, to your natural place, which will make our happiness complete.

Sir, nothing can give me greater happiness or fill my heart with joy but seeing you return to your great role in the leadership of the state. As God is my witness, today I carry burdens that will not be dispersed or alleviated except by the hope that God will preserve you for our sake and prolong your life.

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Sir, in submission to God and then to your gracious order, I will abide, God willing, by all that pleases God and pleases you with regard to the task you have entrusted to me. I will return to you whenever I find myself in need of guidance from your directives and recommendations. I beseech God to preserve you and grant you good health and long life. Peace and God's compassion and blessing be upon you.

[Signed] Your loyal brother 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz

Crown Prince 'Abdallah Issues Draft State Budget

Submits Draft Budget to King Fahd

LD0101153096 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] At al-Yamamah Palace yesterday evening, King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, custodian of the two holy mosques, received His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd- al-'Aziz, crown prince, deputy prime minister, and commander of the National Guard, and His Royal Highness Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, second deputy prime minister, minister of defense and aviation, and inspector general.

His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz submitted to the custodian of the two holy mosques the draft budget of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the 1996 financial year. His highness received the directives of the custodian of the two holy mosques with regard to the draft budget. [passage omitted]

Announces Budget at Ministers' Meeting

LD0101194996 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 1855 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Riyadh, 1 Jan (SPA) — His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, crown prince, deputy prime minister and commander of the National Guard, today announced the issue of the general budget of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the financial years 1416-1417H [1995-1996]. This announcement was made at the meeting of the Council of Ministers which his royal highness chaired this afternoon, at the al-Yamamah Palace in the city of Riyadh. The meeting began with a recital from the Holy Koran, after which His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, crown prince, deputy prime minister, and commander of the National Guard, made the following address:

In the name of God, the compassionate and the merciful: Praise be to God Who has bestowed prosperity and stability on our country under our tolerant Islamic shari'ah; and peace and prayers be on the prophet of guidance and peace.

But to proceed; brother and sister citizens, it pleases me to talk to you on the occasion of the publication of the budget of the new financial year in order to greet you all and pray with you together to God to make this budget a budget of wellbeing and prosperity for our dear country.

Honorable brother citizens: No doubt you are aware of the financial situation that resulted from the Gulf War and the fact that your government had promised to continue to deal with that situation until matters return to the state of strength and balance they used to know, with God's permission.

The budget of the new financial year has been prepared, and it was taken into account that this budget should be an important step in the direction of realizing a balanced budget and the reaffirmation of the strength of the national economy while we are at the beginning of a new financial year. On this occasion it pleases me to announce — with God's blessings — the state budget for the financial year 1416-1417H [1995-1996], which amounts to 150 billion riyals and which has been the center of interest of my brother the custodian of the two holy mosques. We thank God for giving him recovery and for giving him health so that he could follow the preparation of this budget.

Finally, I ask all brother officials in the state apparatus to implement the aims which the budget has been issued to achieve. I pray to Almighty God to preserve and take care of our country and to continue our prosperity and make us more proud. Peace and God's blessings be upon you.

Discusses Aspects of State Budget

LD0101214696 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 1830 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Riyadh, 1 Jan (SPA) — His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, crown prince, deputy prime minister, and commander of the National Guard, said: "We praise God for bestowing innumerable graces on our country, the most important of which are social security, political stability, and economic prosperity."

Addressing the session of the Council of Ministers upon which he presided in the al-Yamamah Palace in Riyadh this afternoon after approving the kingdom's general budget for 1416-1417H [1995-96], the crown prince added: "Under the leadership of King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been and still is concerned with diversifying the mainstays of the national economy,

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despite the noticeable shortage of resources suffered by the world."

HRH Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz stressed that the question of reducing the financial deficit is no longer confined to specific states, but has become a general phenomenon in all human societies.

In a statement to SPA after the meeting, Information Minister Dr. Fu'ad Bin''Abd-al-Salam al-Farisi said that the crown prince reviewed the efforts made to reduce expenditure and the measures adopted by the state to increase non-petroleum revenues, stressing that the industrial and agricultural sectors in the kingdom constitute important sources of income for developing economic resources in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

His highness said that the new budget for the financial year 1416-1417H embodies the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's persistence in the policy it has been pursuing, namely the rationalization of government expenditure and, subsequently, the establishment of precise criteria for expenditures and revenues and the achievement of a balance between them, because it is common knowledge that a sound management of finance and rising competence in its deployment constitute the most important element of success in the process of economic construction.

His highness indicated that during the early years of the fifth development plan, the Saudi economy suffered some financial and organizational difficulties as a result of the war for the liberation of Kuwait from the unjust Iraqi aggression.

His highness said that easing the dependence on the state treasury is a vital request and pointed in this context to the slump in crude oil prices in the year 1414-1415H [1993-94] to a level 30 percent below the target price of the OPEC barrel.

His highness the crown prince stressed that the intensified efforts aimed at determining budgets and consolidating their efficiency led to reduced government expenditure during the last two years of the fifth development plan.

His highness the Crown Prince called upon their royal highnesses the princes and their excellencies the ministers to persevere in implementing the general rules of the budget and committing themselves to the foundations upon which this budget stands while adhering to rationalizing expenditure with a view to striking the right balance between expenditure and revenues.

His Excellency Minister al-Farisi indicated that His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz called upon all the citizens to understand the current circumstances around the world economy and the Saudi one, which is part of the world economy. This requires their positive response to the measures included in the budget and their acceptance of the state targets calling for the pursuance of the policy which is aimed at consolidating the national economy.

His highness the crown prince dealt with the financial situation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and pointed to the fact that the kingdom has been able, thanks be to God, to overcome many financial difficulties which it has undergone, in addition to the fact that the kingdom is currently experiencing a better economic situation in view of the economic measures taken.

His highness, may God protect him, stressed that the sixth five- year plan of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gives priority to achieving a balanced and stable growth of the national economy.

Paper Views Transition of Power as 'Permanent'

MS0201100896 London THE TIMES in English 2 Jan 96 p 14

[Article by Anthony Parsons, Middle East specialist and former Ambassador to Tehran: The Sands Have Not Run Out"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Regimes in Arabia have two defining characteristics: their longevity, and their ability to baffle the West by finding ways round crises which from outside look insurmountable.

Assuming that King Fahd's delegation of authority to Prince 'Abdallah is permanent, the latter will be fifth in succession since the founder of the Kingdom, 'Abd-al-'Aziz ibn-Sa'ud, died in November 1953. Previous successions have taken place in far more troubled circumstances, such as when King al-Faysal succeeded King Sa'ud at the height of pan-Arab republicanism (Nasserism) in 1964, or when King al-Faysal was murdered by a member of the family in 1975. On both occasions, family solidarity weathered the storm. There is no reason why the same should not be the case today.

A smooth transition in Saudi Arabia is as important to the West as it ever was. The end of the Cold War has made little difference. The Arabian peninsula still contains a substantial proportion of the world's oil reserves. Anarchy or radical change in Saudi Arabia would have an immediate impact on the stability of the smaller states, from Kuwait to Oman. Strategically, Saudi Arabia lies between the area of the Arab-Israeli dispute, now at a delicate stage, and the potentially menacing states to the East, namely Saddam Husayn's Iraq and the Shia Muslim theocracy of Iran. The key role of Saudi Arabia in operation Desert Storm five years

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ago is fresh in our minds, and the mullahs in Tehran have been, to say the least, on uneasy terms with the fundamentalist Sunni regime in Riyadh since the fall of the Shah in 1979.

Many commentators have recently predicted trouble for the monarchical regimes in the peninsula. But in my view, the ruling families in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are under less external pressure than at any time since the 1950s. They survived with difficulty the tempest of the socialist, republican, anti- imperialist Arab nationalism which swept away the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchists in the 1950s and which destabilised the whole region until it died with the catastrophic defeat of Arab arms at the hands of the Israelis in June 1967.

Thereafter, Arab public opinion was inflamed by the Palestine problem under the leadership of the PLO, and regimes such as Saudi Arabia which maintained close relations with the West had to stay close to an Arab consensus. In fact, by the 1980s Saudi Arabia had taken the lead in formulating Arab policy on this question. Then, throughout most of the 1980s, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States were dangerously close to the longest and bloodiest interstate war since 1945, the Iran-Iraq conflict launched by Saddam's invasion of southwest Iran in 1980. There is little doubt that without the help of oil-rich Arab states, Iraq would have been beaten, rather than forcing a draw.

In 1990, the underlying truth was at last revealed. The threat of territorial aggression against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, as opposed to subversion, came not from revolutionary Iran, but from sister Iraq. Few people doubt that after gobbling up Kuwait, Saddam would have gone on to dominate Saudi Arabia through a permanent threat of invasion, a threat which he would not have hesitated to implement had he been allowed to get away with his Kuwaiti adventure.

Today all those threats have subsided. Iraq has been neutralised by Desert Storm and the continuing UN sanctions. The revolutionary fire is dying down in Iraq, although there are still ardent spirits who would be glad to stir up trouble among the Shia communities on the Arab shore of the Gulf. However, the mullahs have their hands full with economic recovery, and I do not believe that they have territorial ambitions in the Arab world.

Pan-Arabism is a dead duck; there is no longer such a thing as an Arab consensus on Palestine as the so-called "peace process" edges forward. In any case, Saudi Arabia is widely recognised as a leading player in the Arab League and it is many years since any but maverick regimes publicly criticised Sa'ud policy. Before 1990, American support for Saudi integrity had to be kept "over the horizon" because of wide Arab sensitivity about Washington's relationship with Israel. Saddam's naked aggression against a sister Arab state changed that.

What threat there may be to stability comes from within. Growing populations and the increasing complexity of government have eroded the direct access between rulers and ruled which used to be a partial substitute for democracy. Declining oil prices and the costs of the Gulf War have made it increasingly difficult to maintain expensive social and economic infrastructures such as free education, health services and subsidised housing, without resort to significant taxation. Education and travel are heightening political aspirations among the younger generation.

These factors could well combine to generate strong pressure for changes to a method of government which seems to have more to do with the 18th than the 20th century. If the peninsula were an oasis of autocracy in a sea of established democracies, such pressure could become irresistible; but it is not. Anyone seeking radical change in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf has only to look at the dire nature of neighbouring alternatives to wonder whether it would not be better to leave well alone — or at most to seek gradual rather than violent change.

National Guard To Conduct Mobilization Exercises

LD0101153496 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
1453 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jeddah, 1 Jan (SPA) — In the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Faysal Bin-'Abdallah Bin-Muhammad Al Sa'ud, deputy commander of the National Guard in the western region, final mobilization exercises, which will be carried out by the 'Umar Bin-al-Khattab brigade at a location in al-Ta'if, will be held tomorrow.

His highness will witness the fighting and defense capabilities of the members of the support battalions and units in al-Ta'if, and acquaint himself with modern command methods in coordination with the support forces.

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Saddam Urges Halt to Economic Deterioration

JN3112171095 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0755 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 31 Dec (INA)—His Excellency President Saddam Husayn has stated that the first practical step in the right direction we must take this year is to stop the decline in the exchange rate of Iraqi currency. From now on, we should not allow the exchange rate of the dinar to drop beyond the level it has reached.

In a speech delivered while chairing a cabinet session held on 2 December 1995, his excellency the president added: One of the most important measures that must be taken under the circumstances to improve the state of affairs of our economy, including the exchange rate of the dinar, is to reduce the amended budget for 1995 by a percentage to be agreed upon, and to reconsider the projects planned for 1995 that have still not been implemented.

His excellency the president added: We are not the kind of people who can stand idly by while observing negative phenomena. We have to intervene seriously and firmly, and remedy such phenomena drastically.

The president touched on the issue of services and investment projects. He instructed that any horizontal expansion in these areas be rejected unless the expansion in question concerns services whose availability is crucial to the production of necessary commodities that are indispensable for services which could yield paid-up revenues. The revenues in question must be handsome. They must exceed the money spent on these services. New investment projects must be turned down unless the projects in question are aimed at developing an existing facility with a view to increasing production considerably. Such projects must produce a handsome increase in production.

His excellency the president addressed the ministers, saying: We must halt the deterioration and improve our economy. No further deterioration should be allowed. From now on, there should be no further setbacks. We are required to score a series of economic victories so that there may be a great relaxation thereafter, God willing.

His Excellency President Saddam Husayn added: Our projects and services must be commensurate with the population's capabilities, and also with our plans for workers' wages in terms of quantity and quality.

His excellency the president urged the ministers to examine the possibility of increasing state revenues by levying taxes and fees. As a first step, all exemptions from taxes and fees must be canceled. The tax and fee exemptions that benefited sectors of the population that are capable of paying must be canceled, for these sectors are contributing to growing inflation through the increases in wages and cost of services rendered to citizens.

His excellency the president ordered a study on reducing the overall amount of the banknotes currently in circulation, saying: I believe that there is a large amount of banknotes currently in circulation. We must draw up a plan to reduce this amount by withdrawing portions of it from the market. This is because when the amount of banknotes in circulation in the market is reduced, the exchange rate of the Iraqi dinar will improve. Consequently, prices will go down, and so will inflation. Additionally, we must lay our hands on the savings of self-financing businesses and those of the mixed sector, or restrict disbursement of these savings by a certain percentage and channel the amounts withdrawn from them into priority spending outlets.

Elaborating further on measures to reinforce the local currency, his excellency the president said: You will be experiencing new conditions until the wheel of change evolves, and until everybody begins to reap benefits. The worth and usefulness of the 1 billion dinar allocations earmarked to a certain agency will increase due to an improved exchange rate of the dinar. The same holds true for the 200,000-dinar salary earned by an employee. This would reflect steadfastness and perseverance in the face of the enemy's offensive.

His Excellency President Saddam Husayn added: The enemy failed to achieve the objectives it has set for itself by military means. Similarly, it failed to use the world media to its advantage, because our people, after six years, made their choice clear. Can there be a stronger manifestation of the failure of the enemy's multifaceted efforts, including media efforts, other than our people's declaration of their choice on the Great March Day?

His excellency went on to say: So, the enemy has failed in all fields. Nonetheless, it has continued to wager on the continuation of the economic deterioration. If each of us has to make a sacrifice, then he or she has to make it at his or her own position and in accordance with his or her own endurance capacity.

President Saddam cautioned against the continuation of the deterioration, and against accepting it as a fact of life, saying: The greatest peril is to resign ourselves to this deterioration, to accept it as a fact of life, and not to halt or remedy it. It is high time we halted and remedied this deterioration to improve our lot. To do so, our expenditure should not exceed our revenues.

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His Excellency President Saddam Husayn said: We must achieve our objective and view our country as an oil country and a non-oil country at the same time. We can view our country as an oil country because we consume oil without paying for it in foreign currency. We are using this oil at our plants, in our cars, and to illuminate the country. In the same vein, we can view our country as a non-oil country, because we are not exporting oil due to the embargo clamped on us. This characterization will remain valid until there is a breakthrough in our favor.

The president added: We are about to debate the budget. Every year, we set forth guidelines that guide the work of the Ministry of Finance, which in turn discusses with ministers issues regarding the allocations and spending that they need. Our major problem at present is the shortage of foreign currency, for we have used up much of the Central Bank's gold and foreign currency reserves. These reserves backed the value of the banknotes we issued. This matter has something to do with the conventional wisdom acted upon by world banks. Worse still, the embargo has weakened our economy in terms of exports and production.

His excellency the president went on to say: We must reinvigorate the services rendered in exchange for fees. We must promote production so that we may introduce new commodities on the market. Whenever services are promoted and expanded, and whenever their quality is improved, their value, that is, the unit cost, increases. As a first step, there should be no increases to the amended budget for 1995.

The president said: We are in a real battle. For no military victory can make up for an economic defeat. The military victory would surely go down the annals of history. But the end result is that the enemy would achieve goals to our detriment through the economic defeat that we could sustain.

The president concluded by saying: So, this year, we would like to say that the first practical step in the right direction that we can take is to halt the deterioration. That is, we should not allow the exchange rate of the Iraqi dinar to suffer any further setbacks.

Saddam Addresses 3 Dec Cabinet Session

JN0101153296 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1230 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 1 Jan (INA)—President Saddam Husayn has said that the blockade has been a battle between the will of the Iraqis and that of the enemies, who have abandoned all the principles of humanitarianism, goodness, and the straight path. The battle of the blockade, he said, has continued until now, and will go on until God decides otherwise, crowned with faith and the will of the Iraqis, since all attempts by the aggressors have failed to achieve those goals represented in their abortive wishes against Iraq.

In a message he addressed to members of the Council of Ministers on 3 December, President Saddam Husayn said that the success of our nation and our state organs is considered a great one, because the battle was extremely important, comprehensive, and complicated and had no precedence in terms of the victory it had achieved.

His excellency also said that Iraq's great people have confronted the terrible media battles since before 2 August, the Day of the Great Call, and until the Day of the Great March—a battle whose effect on some people was even more powerful than bombs and missiles. The chapters of the military duel, whose details you know, then followed. All this occurred and was followed by the unjust blockade, the dirtiest means used by the evildoers against Iraq's great people. Yet, Iraq's free people, women, and everyone at all levels of the state and society have stood up with their leadership to face of one of the most serious missions in a climate filled with many forms of military, media, and intelligence aggression, and with the economic blockade.

He added: The Iraqis have launched the mission of reconstructing all that was destroyed by the aggression, so that life's material, moral, and spiritual requirements and course could go on. Iraqis demonstrated their skill in this mission, relying on Almighty God, and soon after starting the reconstruction process, they realized that the mere reconstruction would remain unfinished in our great march and our glorious time. They, however, started meeting the requirements of the stage and were able to carry out new reconstruction works. Therefore, God has enabled them to carry out reconstruction and new construction despite the prolonged blockade, which has consumed much of the treasure that formed part of Iraq's vital wealth.

His Excellency President Saddam Husayn, president of the republic, added: Despite all the great efforts that were undertaken on all levels, we found that the problem of the dinar's exchange rate against the dollar is still outstanding. This problem is coupled with an increase in inflation. Given these two factors, in addition to other causes, the prices have been on the rise in an accelerated manner — which we reject — over the recent years and even months. This phenomenon means the Iraqis' savings, salaries, and wages will erode into unacceptable levels.

He added: In light of the dearth in foreign, or so-called hard, currency — given the continued blockade against and preventing Iraq from exporting its wealth, foremost

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of which is oil — I had the opportunity to reflect on our economic and financial situation for a few days. I found that this situation requires a reevaluation that is more serious and comprehensive than the previous ones. This reevaluation should be conducted not only by the state and the concerned agencies alone, but also by the people, who always lend us th. ir moral support, great capabilities, and blessings. This will be done after we display the facts before them just as they are and mobilize them in the direction that will be chosen.

His excellency went on to say: I should tell you that as I submit these proposals — regarding what I believe to be an urgent solution and a key of change to halt the negative factors and seek to improve the situation — I am supposed, based on my responsibility, to tell you that some of the ideas I suggest are decisions and not ideas for discussion only. However, the major portion of the proposals I will submit to you will be subject to a discussion which will lead to an agreement on the solutions. We rely on God.

His excellency the president defined his proposals and visions in this respect. He said: Among the things that should be done — in order to curb inflation, and thus curb or stop the increase in prices and help people meet their basic need without making any changes and through issuing special drawing rights — is to check government spending and stop issuing orders to print extra banknotes. The above reference on stopping issuance of new banknotes to be added to the currency currently in circulation means that the spending should not exceed the agreed-on limits so that no extra currency is issued.

He added that the abovementioned proposals stipulate the adoption of a policy to immediately stop the deterioration. This requires that we do not increase allotments for the 1996 investment plan and the current expenditure budget, and that the criteria be based on actual spending of the revised allocations for the 1995 budget and plan. This also requires that we proceed from this to reduce expenditures and allotments at an agreed-on percentage and to improve conditions in other fields. This also requires that we reduce the number of cars in all state bodies and sell surplus vehicles at a public auction according to the law. Even those cars belonging to the president of the republic and to the offices and bodies linked to him should not be excluded from this decision. The Ministry of Defense is the only party that is not included in this decision. The president, commander in chief of the Armed Forces, is to look into the allowable number of cars for the Ministry of Defense based on the ministry's need for them.

President Saddam Husayn stressed the importance of controlling the Armed Forces' expenditures, and that the president, commander in chief of the Armed Forces, should study as much of these expenditures as possible with the bodies concerned without approving any new services. In other words, the president should reject any horizontal expansion in these services for whatever reason. He should also reduce as much spending on these services as possible, and keep this spending within minimum technical and scientific limits, that is, to avoid the destruction of what already exists. Furthermore, new investment projects should not be introduced unless they are aimed at developing an existing project with a view of increasing production considerably. Or, a new project should introduce a new commodity within a short time to prevent a shortage of such a commodity.

In his message, President Saddam Husayn urged the ministers to discuss each new project at the council of the ministry linked to that project and by a board of directors — a board headed by the director general and in which the directors are members — at the public directorate's level or at any similar level. Decisions regarding these projects should be made before they are referred to higher bodies for discussion. Until further notice, decisions at all levels regarding these projects should made with a two-thirds majority of the members. The president also urged that the economic committee discuss these projects case by case in the presence of the minister concerned. After the economic committee approves these projects with a two-thirds majority, they should be referred to the Council of Ministers for discussion and approval. These projects should then take their well known constitutional course. The president also called for discussing self-financed projects in the same manner.

President Saddam stressed that state decisions do not provide for pay increases. He noted the need for reviewing the policy of subsidies in accordance with what will be agreed on, and for stopping any expansion of aid until further notice. The president called for concentrating on increasing state revenues through taxes, fees, and canceling exemptions for those capable of paying taxes and those who contribute to increasing the margin of inflation. His excellency called for increasing the prices of certain services for those sectors capable of paying these prices. President Saddam also called for canceling any expansion of assistance or opening any new fields for receiving assistance except in emergencies or in cases showing just cause. He also called for improving methods of collecting fees and taxes and increasing the number of people who have to pay these fees and taxes, provided that the economy will not be crippled.

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His excellency noted the importance of studying the possibility of selling state property in accordance with valid laws in order to increase the revenues of the Central Bank from banknotes, rather than printing them. He also called for studying the possibility of reducing a percentage of the circulated banknotes, taking possession of the savings of the self-financing activities, restricting spending to a percentage of savings, and spending the drawn money in accordance with a list of priorities laid down by the board of directors with regard to the activities related to the powers of the general director. The Council of Ministers will decide on issues related to higher powers within the ministry.

President Saddam Husayn highlighted the importance of studying the possibility of imposing inflation-reduction fees on the selling of commodities from the state and private sector, and on services provided by the state. The president called for strengthening and developing the financial departments and the audit bureau to enable them carry out their tasks mentioned in this message.

Concluding his message, through which he addressed the members of the Council of Ministers, his excellency reiterated that, God willing, we seek help from the Iraqis' enthusiasm, awareness, principles, steadfastness, and faithfulness, as well as from your honesty, experience, and generosity.

Saddam's Brother Watban Said 'Under House-Arrest'

JN0101122796 Amman AL-HADATH in Arabic 3 Jan 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Reports from Baghdad say Watban Ibrahim al-Hasan, half brother of President Saddam Husayn and former interior minister, was put under house-arrest in one of his houses in al-Fahhamah suburb of Baghdad after he rejected reconciliation with 'Udayy, the president's son. 'Udayy shot him on 8 August, injuring him in the legs and other parts of his body.

Sources said President Saddam made this decision after Watban's failure to attend a reconciliation dinner with 'Udayy that he hosted in Tikrit late last November.

Eyewitnesses said forces from the special security units led by Qusayy Saddam Husayn, surrounded Watban's house last Monday and dismissed his guards, companions, and a number of his family members from the house after informing him personally that he is banned from leaving the house until further notice.

The Iraqi authorities allowed Watban's second wife, who is the sister of Sajidah Saddam Husayn, to visit him and pass on his requirements. The sources did not rule out the possibility that Watban may be sent to court after review by the special investigation panel. We published a report three weeks ago on this panel's decision to send a number of his former assistants at the Interior Ministry to court on charges of collusion and exploitation of post.

Watban is receiving the clear sympathy of tribes loyal to the regime in Tikrit and influential personalities in the security and police organs in particular and military commanders outside Baghdad. He is also supported by his brother Sab'awi Ibrahim al-Hasan, former commander of Public Security.

Oil Agreement Signed With Jordan; Officials Comment

JN3012120495 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1114 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 30 Dec (INA)—Iraq and Jordan today signed the minutes of an agreement to promote bilateral oil cooperation in the presence of Oil Minister Lieutenant General Engineer 'Amir Muhammad Rashid.

In a statement to the IRAQI NEWS AGENCY, Lt. Gen. Engineer 'Amir Muhammad Rashid said that the agreement provides for a slight increase in Jordan's imports of crude oil and oil derivatives to meet Jordanian needs.

Rashid added that the issue of building a pipeline to transport Iraqi oil to the Jordanian port of al-'Aqabah and developing the Jordanian Petroleum Refinery is currently under consideration.

For his part, Ahmad Muhammad al-Bashir, secretary general of the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, pointed out that the provisions agreed upon today will help meet Jordan's requirements of crude oil and oil derivatives for next year, especially since some increases have been provided for in the agreement.

Taha Humud Musa, senior under secretary at the Ministry of Oil, signed the agreement for Iraq, while Ahmad Muhammad al-Bashir, secretary general of the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, signed for Jordan. Several directors general and advisers at the Ministry of Oil and members of the Jordanian delegation attended the signing ceremony.

It should be recalled that Iraqi-Jordanian oil talks began here on 25 December. Several oil affairs specialists took part in the talks, which addressed the means to promote prospects for bilateral oil cooperation between the two fraternal countries. The two sides discussed meeting Jordan's needs of crude oil and oil derivatives for 1996. They agreed to continue to study joint projects whose implementation has been agreed.

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During the talks, Ahmad Muhammad al-Bashir, secretary general of the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, said that the necessary field studies on the construction of an oil pipeline between Iraq and Jordan have been completed.

The Jordanian oil official, who arrived in Iraq at the head of a technical delegation at dawn on 25 December, added that his current visit to Iraq is aimed at promoting bilateral oil cooperation and meeting Jordan's needs of crude oil and oil derivatives for 1996.

Travelers Cited on Border Controls With Jordan

JN3012133195 Amman AL-URDUN in Arabic 1 Jan 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Officials and travelers have said that Iraq has tightened control on transportation and communication links with Jordan after Amman adopted stands critical of the Iraqi Government.

Iraqi travelers and bus drivers said that Baghdad doubled the departure fees to 400,000 Iraqi dinars — equivalent to $150 — which Iraqis have to pay. Moreover, obtaining approval to leave Iraq now takes a month while previously it used to take only 10 days.

This step has dealt a severe blow to the movement of travelers, whose number has already dropped since the deterioration in relations last August.

The number of Iraqis coming to Jordan has virtually dropped to zero since these measures were adopted.

Officials said that Baghdad recently cut off direct international telephone links with Amman in what they said was an attempt to prevent any coordination between opposition groups abroad with supporters inside Iraq.

Closure of the borders is said to be definitely out of the question, since Jordan is the main outlet for Iraq in terms of communication with the outside world and importing basic foodstuffs because of the UN sanctions imposed on Baghdad.

Jordan this week revealed that it seized poisonous chemicals that could be used for manufacturing weapons. These chemicals were destined for Iraq in violation of UN sanctions.

The United Nations has for a long time been urging Jordan to stop the activities of companies registered in Amman which work as fronts for Iraq, and are claimed to be playing a very important role in the survival of the Iraqi Government.

Opposition Plans Joint Military Command in North

NC0101160496 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi People in Arabic 1500 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An Iraqi opposition figure in London told the magazine AL-WASAT that several Iraqi opposition factions are currently in touch with each other to form a field command in northern Iraq whose task would be to escalate military operations against the government of the tyrant Saddam Husayn.

Major General Wafiq al-Samarra'i, former director of Iraq's military intelligence service, explained that the new field command will represent all segments of the Iraqi population and will seek to carry out military operations similar to those carried out in March 1995 against the Baghdad regime's forces.

He added that this field command will also seek to expand its contacts with the Iraqi Armed Forces and wage psychological warfare against the despotic regime.

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Peres Comments on Negotiations With Syria

Calls Talks 'Good'

TA3112093895 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0900 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Speaking at the cabinet session this morning, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said that the first round of talks with Syria was good. He noted that no maps were presented at the talks and reiterated the formula set by Rabin according to which the depth of withdrawal will equal the depth of peace. He added that the head of the Syrian delegation at the talks insisted that it is Syria's aim to attain peace honorably.

Mr. Peres further said that the Syrian representative did not object to army officers' joining the negotiations but that the date for this has not been set yet. He went on to say that there is a gap between Israel and Syria, primarily with regard to the nature of peace. According to him, the next round of talks, starting on 3 January, will deal mainly with the quality of peace.

Uri Savir, head of the Israeli delegation, told our political correspondent Shlomo Raz that Israel suggested that the delegations not be expanded at this stage.

Views Nature of Agreements

TA3112160795 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1400 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres says Israel has not given Syria or any other element any commitment not to act against Hizballah, adding that the only consideration in this respect is of a security nature. Mr. Peres made these remarks during a meeting with members of the Qiryat Shemona municipality.

Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that at today's cabinet meeting Prime Minister Peres said it has been concluded with Syria that in their talks the sides will broach all outstanding issues between the two countries, as well as the establishment of regional peace. It has also been agreed that once peace is achieved terrorism will stop. The prime minister reviewed the results of the Maryland talks and said that the gap between the sides mainly relates to the substance of peace.

Views 'Political' Versus 'Strategic' Peace

TA0101110796 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 1 Jan 96 p A3

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Speaking at yesterday's cabinet session, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres distinguished between two levels of regional peace: political and strategic. The prime minister explained that political peace could be reached with all the Arab states, with the exception of Iraq, Iran, and Libya; whereas in the future, peace on the strategic level would also include the latter three. [passage omitted]

Peres noted that at the Maryland talks with the Syrians, the Israeli delegation raised the problems considered most vital by Israel, such as the water issue. "This is an acute matter," Peres said. "We will not agree to jeopardize our water resources and Lake Tiberias." [passage omitted]

Peres also denied two reports which were published recently. One report claimed that the late Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin committed himself to a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, while the second report asserted that Israel had asked the United States for large-scale military aid within the context of a future agreement with Syria. [passage omitted]

Says Talks To Work Out Terms for Dialogue

TA0201122196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said that the current stage in the contacts with Syria is one of working out the terms for a dialogue. He said the aim is to create an atmosphere of dialogue in order to clarify the differences of opinion. At this stage, the delegations have not touched on the controversial issues.

Our correspondent Yo'el Nir reports that Peres told Labor's Knesset faction that Israel has not given any commitment on maps and there has not been any discussion on the subject. He denied reports that the United States has presented a bridging proposal between the Israeli and Syrian positions.

Comments on Golan Heights

TA0201145396 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1940 GMT 1 Jan 96

["Special New Year interview" with Prime Minister Shim'on Peres by Dan Shilon in the Jerusalem studio — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Shilon] You look much more determined, much more decisive than I remember you in the past.

[Peres] The Jewish people have been given an unprecedented opportunity.

[Shilon] We will soon discuss the opportunities and the political angle, but let us now discuss your personal feeling. That impression is correct, is it not? Peres is

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much more active, much more committed, much more decisive.

[Peres] Yes, because I do not feel I am competing for power. I feel that while I used to be inclined to consider power, I am now inclined to consider responsibility. I feel I must act with supreme responsibility.

[Shilon] Is it true that immediately after Rabin's assassination, you considered leaving political life?

[Peres] No. I knew that not only was Yitzhaq sentenced to death but that I, too, was sentenced: I was ordered to continue. Paradoxically, his assassination obligated me to go on.

[Shilon] In other words, the reports that you considered resigning and that it was President Clinton who convinced you to continue are baseless?

[Peres] They are incorrect. It is as clear as daylight that I do not run from a bullet and do not cave in because a friend was murdered.

[Shilon] You said you would continue Yitzhaq Rabin's heritage. Nevertheless, you added — after I have listened to the nuances of remarks you have made — that you are a different person facing different problems.

[Peres] Yes. What is a heritage? It belongs to the past. The future is not a heritage; it is a vision. There is a difference. I will defend what we did together and I will respect those things to which he committed himself, but there is no heritage regarding what must be decided tomorrow.

[Shilon] Even though you knew and still know that he had a different world outlook about the future.

[Peres] That is incorrect. His world outlook was more the result of a certain temperament and different tactics. Basically, we had the same outlook.

[Shilon] Mr. Prime Minister, when will you publicly and officially announce what you apparently believe in your heart: that the entire Golan belongs to Syria?

[Peres] I told my friends in the negotiations that negotiations are conducted on two equal legs and not on one short and another long one, not with one large step and another small one. In other words, it will happen when I see that both legs are equal and that both steps are being taken in unison. Up until now, the Syrian side has said: What step will you take? I also want to know what step the Syrians will take, what it is that we are discussing.

[Shilon] But the Syrians know more or less — or perhaps even exactly — that we are prepared to descend from the entire Golan Heights. The price is known. The thing we are waiting for is what they will give in return.

[Peres] They may know, but until they hear it from us, they do not respect the knowledge they receive over the airwaves. They want to hear the word outright from us. I say to the Syrian side, to President al-Asad: We made peace with Egypt; we made peace with Jordan; we are negotiating with the Palestinians. Are you prepared to lead in ending the war in the Middle East? That is the main issue that interests me.

[Shilon] If he says yes in principle, will you say to him: I will withdraw from the entire Golan Heights?

[Peres] I will then give him a response on the depth of the withdrawal. What will the answer be? I will wait until I have to give it and not say it now.

[Shilon] But you have already said it several times, and your view is known. You have already said that the price of peace with Syria will be more or less the same as it was with Egypt. You have also said that the Golan is Syrian soil....

[Peres, interrupting] Was Syrian soil.

[Shilon] I stand corrected. In other words, he can understand from you that the price Israel will pay is absolutely clear.

[Peres] Mathematics is not only algebraic formulas. Yitzhaq said the depth of the withdrawal will equal the depth of the peace. What do you understand from that? It is exactly the same. But there is a difference between words.... [pauses] I want to tell you something from my experience in life. I understand the tendency of many of my friends in the media to say things clearly. If I say things clearly, there will be a fight; I will not agree with him, and he will not agree with me. In a very strange way, if you want to negotiate, you have to move from the clear to the ambiguous.

[Shilon] Please explain to me why the Syrians have become optimistic in the past month, why Secretary of State Christopher is optimistic. Do they know something they did not know two months ago, prior to Yitzhaq Rabin's assassination? Have you changed direction? Have you told them things in greater detail than previously?

[Peres] First of all, not only have things been said but things have also happened. First, let us see what has happened, and then I will say what has been said. What has happened is that Yitzhaq's assassination suddenly showed them that the differences of opinion in Israel are not a show but are very serious. There are two views and two schools here, and things could change. Second, what I heard from the Syrians via the Americans was very interesting. They said: We do not think your agreement with the Palestinians is very good, but the fact that

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you are implementing it shows you are very serious people. The Palestinians always said Gaza first, which they thought meant that it would be last. They said: You are starting to implement Oslo B, which means you will not see it through. They were very impressed by our implementation.

[Shilon] Did they demand a role in the negotiations on the permanent settlement?

[Peres] No, definitely not.

[Shilon] In other words, the negotiations on the permanent settlement will not include a Syrian presence?

[Peres] No. First, there are another three years before the permanent settlement. I do not think they will postpone peace with us for another three years. That would be a mistake on their part. They may not have liked the negotiations with Jordan, but the fact is that they were concluded and implemented, and a new reality was created. They also got new things from us.

[Shilon] Such as giving up the demand for early warning stations?

[Peres] No. I said I am offering completely different negotiations, like in Oslo. Each delegation can come up with anything without committing itself to anything. What happens in negotiations? You start throwing around ideas. Otherwise, if every word you utter is a position, I would call it verbal rattling. You come up with a phrase; I come up with a phrase. For three and a half years, we rattled phrases. Let us sit down and see what you really need. Do not make a commitment; make your views heard. For instance, they were surprised to hear about the water issue and economic cooperation.

[Shilon] Speaking of verbal rattling, the media reported that when you read the minutes of the negotiations for those three and a half years, you reacted with derision and contempt at the way they were handled. Is that true?

[Peres] No. I told Yitzhaq the same thing I am telling you now. I said to him that this way will lead nowhere. Just as you cannot sew a garment if you do not know the body's measurements, you cannot make security arrangements if you do not know what the political and economic arrangements will be. In other words, you have to create both the body and the garment.

I would like to add something on this point. As you know, you learn things in life. Fortunately, I have had the privilege of participating in negotiations many times in my life, and I learned something. When you conduct negotiations, you must ask yourself what comes first: a plan that joins the two partners or a partnership that is conducive to a plan? For many years, I have been of the opinion that one should not start with the plan, because this will immediately show that you do not agree with me and I do not agree with you, and that will be the end of it. With the Palestinians, too, we first created a partnership or partner, and then we talked about a plan.

[Shilon] You said: Give me peace and I will give up the atom. Did this have anything to do with a Syrian demand?

[Peres] God forbid, never.

[Shilon] Was it a slip of the tongue?

[Peres] It was no slip of the tongue. Look, I do not want to criticize the press. What I said was the following: Israel has said that it will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East. Incidentally, I was the one who said this, and it set our policy. Second, I said that Israel would not expose what it has in Dimona and that we would continue to maintain a policy of vagueness. I said those exact same words, because if Iran — to cite just one example — is wary of us, I see no reason why we should tell it that it need not worry and that we have nothing. Why should I say that? We have all been saying that if comprehensive peace is reached in the Middle East — such a peace would include Iraq, Iran, Libya, and everybody else — then we would work together to create a Middle East free of nuclear arms. I then wrapped up my speech by saying: Give me peace, and I will give you a Middle East free of a nuclear policy.

[Shilon] Let us play a game and pretend for a few minutes that I am Binyamin Netanyahu, and I tell you: Mr. Prime Minister, you are a cultured man, and we have personal and family ties, but nevertheless I would like to tell you that you are taking a big gamble with our lives. If you win this gamble you may make peace, but if you lose it we will cease to exist.

[Peres] How could that happen? You know, I was alone even when we started the business with Dimona. People told me that....

[Shilon, interrupting] I am not talking about the nuclear issue but about the negotiations with the Syrians.

[Peres] Then, too, people told me that I was gambling with our lives. I have gambled so many times, but the gambles have never been lost. I am not gambling anything. A unique opportunity has been created today with regard to Syria. You spoke earlier about all the youngsters who lit candles after Rabin's assassination. Taking the Middle East, all those youngsters, out of a state of war — that is the gamble. I believe that whoever does not allow us to do that is gambling with our lives. With all due respect, I would reply to Bibi Netanyahu: You are the one who is gambling with our lives, because

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when all is said and done, Iran will acquire nuclear arms, Iraq will get nuclear weapons....

[Shilon, interrupting] Will they not acquire them anyway?

[Peres] I want to prevent it and create a coalition that is not based on a combination of fundamentalism and nonconventional arms. You can stave off either fundamentalism or arms, but if you do not prevent either, then you are gambling with Israel's life. [passage omitted]

Views Peace With Syria, Others

JN3112182895 Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 29 Dec 95 pp 33-36

[Interview with Prime Minister Shim'on Peres by 'Abir 'Aql in Jerusalem; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Introductory passage omitted] ['Aql] Political developments over the past few weeks have restored hope in the possibility of realizing peace with Syria and Lebanon. Can we know the exact outlines of the entire plan for a solution, or perhaps the clear scenario of what you presented in Washington leading to the resumption of talks with Syria?

[Peres] We are in the stage of ending the historical enmity and resolving the Palestinian-Israeli struggle through peaceful means. Therefore, it is meaningless to continue the war and deny education to the future generations. Efforts must be pooled to create a better future. Syria has a prominent role to play in reaching a comprehensive regional peace in which we speak of war for the last time and of real peace for the first time. President Hafiz al-Asad has a great share in ending the Middle East war. In the past, peace was a political peace. Today, it is a political, economic, and psychological peace. It is the peace of economy and the war against poverty, ignorance. It is meant to create a new climate and a proper ground for prosperity and a better life. Some Arabs and Israel have tasted peace, and there is no reason for the other Arabs not to taste it.

['Aql] But the question today is: What kind of peace will there be with Syria? What exactly are your proposals, especially concerning the regional role and comprehensive peace?

[Peres] So many questions await the right answers. This is up to the negotiating peoples or to all neighboring peoples to answer — such as the question of water. How can the water needed for Syria, Jordan, the Palestinians, Lebanon, and Israel be secured? Water is not politics. There is no rightist water or leftist water. Rivers do not take political courses and do not run alongside borders. Suitable solutions, taking everyone's needs into consideration, must be realized. This applies to the security arrangements that must take into account the needs of Syria, Israel, and Lebanon.

On the other hand, there are issues related to differences in views, such as borders. The late prime minister, Yitzhaq Rabin, upheld the principle that the depth of the Israeli withdrawal will be commensurate with the depth of peace with Syria. This in itself is enough for the phase of starting the negotiations.

['Aql] Among the nine points on which agreement was reached, there seems to be a Syrian commitment to pacify the situation in southern Lebanon. Is this the beginning of the agreement?

[Peres] There is no official agreement, but there was an Israeli demand directed to Syria through the United States concerning the situation in southern Lebanon. This demand was not in an official form, but was not rejected.

['Aql] You have noted the possibility of bridging the gaps between the Syrian and Israeli attitudes, even in matters related to security arrangements, such as ground warning stations. Will the alternative to this be effective U.S. assistance?

[Peres] I have not talked about bridging the gaps in stands, but in topics.

['Aql] Can we say that there has been a retreat from the ground warning stations demand, and that the alternative will be through direct U.S. assistance?

[Peres] Do you want me to hold negotiations with you or with the Syrian delegation?

['Aql] You have repeatedly said that you are ready to pay the price of peace. Isn't now the right time to say what this price is, clearly and exactly?

[Peres] I proposed that all sides come to the negotiating table, not only to talk and listen, but also to understand each other's stand and what each wants. I was pleased because my proposals were accepted. However, I am not ready to get into details or hold negotiations away from the negotiating table.

['Aql] What is the essence of the expression: the depth of withdrawal will equal the depth of peace with Syria? Does this mean that you want the implementation of withdrawal be in parallel with peace, or you want peace first, although you have no doubt about Syria's sovereignty over the Golan?

[Peres] We have proceeded from the land-for-peace formula. It happened that Israel returned all territories, but it did not get full peace [reference to withdrawal from

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Sinai]. Peace will continue to be a slogan if it does not materialize into solid facts. For example, the Golan should become a symbol of joint cooperation, development, and prosperity for all sides. Of course, this will not forfeit sovereignty. I also want to see all mountains, territories, and other areas become prosperous areas instead of being military zones. This is the essence of peace.

['Aql] What are your expectations over the resumption of negotiations with Syria on 27 December?

[Peres] I expect to reach a peace treaty with Syria before the date of the legislative elections in Israel next year. Based on this, we have said that peace is more important than victory in the election campaign. We have 10 months to reach this goal. This is not a long time. This is why we have proposed the holding of serious and extensive negotiations to reach an acceptable agreement which focuses on mutual respect, but does not encroach on each other's rights and interests.

['Aql] Following your talks in Cairo, Amman, Gaza, Washington, and Rabat, and after the U.S. secretary of state's shuttle tour, can we say that a new chapter of relations has begun between you and President al-Asad, which would lead to a summit meeting and to an agreement in 1996?

[Peres] I can only speak about my own calendar, not that of President al-Asad. In my textbook, a new leaf has been turned. I do not ignore the positive tone in the Syrian news media. The French speak about the tone which creates music, but I prefer the symphony which is free of discordant tones.

['Aql] It is known that all the attempts to separate the Syrian track from the Lebanese track have failed. So, does your expression about a Lebanese branch within the Israeli negotiating delegation mean that you will negotiate with Syria on behalf of Lebanon, and, consequently, can we say that what has been published about a transient agreement guaranteeing Israel's recognition of the Syrian presence in Lebanon are true?

[Peres] The Syrians and Lebanese can come to the negotiations any way they want, and talk about any issue they like. We will not impose any conditions on them, or tell them what to do. We neither represent the Syrian nor the Lebanese sides; we represent the Israeli side only.

['Aql] Do you have any phased agreement that Israel will recognize Syria's presence in Lebanon?

[Peres] I do not believe in phased agreements. A comprehensive solution should be reached to end all wars, including the one going on in Lebanon. We are not seeking a comprehensive Middle East peace excluding Lebanon.

['Aql] How do you view peace with Lebanon? Will Syria maintain its military presence there, or will Lebanon be its own master and become free, independent, and without any foreign troops? And what will be the fate of the inhabitants of the border strip and Lahd's army after you withdraw from the south?

[Peres] It is Lebanon alone that will determine its fate. As for us, no Israeli has ambitions in Lebanese territories or wants to interfere in Lebanon's policies. Lebanon was independent, and we had good relations with it. We hope it will determine its fate and enjoy peace and prosperity like other states in the region.

['Aql] What will happen to pro-Israeli Lahd militias?

[Peres] Any issue needs agreement, and the time is not ripe for this issue to be discussed. However, we should admit that it is our duty to protect the inhabitants of the security region as long as we are there. I am committed to the principles of the late Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin, who called for securing the future, safety, and prosperity of the inhabitants of the border strip, including the South Lebanese Army. We have to obtain suitable guarantees for such a protection.

['Aql] Do you not think that the Lebanese Army is able to meet its obligations and maintain security in the south after Israel's withdrawal to the international borders, or would you prefer Syrian guarantees for that?

[Peres] I hope that the Lebanese Army will maintain internal security and not only the security of the border area. It is Lebanon that should decide if it wants one or several armies. Hizballah is an army in Lebanon. Lebanon should decide if it wants to be a state within a state, armies within one army, or one army. All these issues should be decided by Lebanon.

['Aql] Withdrawal from the West Bank cities will be completed by the end of this month. Do you not view this as a Palestinian- Israeli peace, which will crystallize an independent Palestinian entity or a confederation with Jordan?

[Peres] We have fulfilled every promise we made despite the terrible assassination of the prime minister and despite acts of terrorism and strong opposition. I urge those negotiating with us to consider Israel's credibility. As for the final solution, we can say there are various solutions. But now I do not want to express my views, since solutions proposed before the time is ripe become unacceptable. When the time is ripe, we may have new ideas, as the case has been.

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['Aql] Pope Paul was quoted as saying several days ago that Jerusalem is the capital of the three divine religions. How can the Jerusalem issue, which prevents a comprehensive regional peace, be resolved?

[Peres] I share the pope's view, which differentiates between the status of Jerusalem as a religious city and its status as a political city. Jerusalem will remain open to all religions and believers in God, and there will no control or interference in religious rituals. In light of this, I do not object to religious sovereignty over Jerusalem being for God.

['Aql] Do you believe peace will be achieved in the region without Iraq, and how do you view future relations with Iraq and its people in light of the previous contacts between you?

[Peres] We have no problem with Iraq except that of Saddam Husayn. Iraq is a large country dominated by a dictator, who is destroying it. We have no objection to Iraq becoming a partner in regional peace, only if it frees itself from the dictator.

['Aql] As prime minister, you chose Cairo first as an expression of the good relations between you and President Mubarak. What are your expectations regarding Egypt's role in the peace process, considering the weight it carries in the Arab world?

[Peres] Egypt has offered a great deal to the peace process, and I express my appreciation for the Egyptian leadership and friendly people. I do hope that they will continue their efforts to advance the peace process, not just with Syria, but also regional peace, which we all need. We live in a world where power and ability do not depend on the area occupied or the material possessed, but on science, knowledge, and technology. Such things are not confined to geographical boundaries. Therefore it is illogical to fight wars for the sake of a piece of land or material gains that are not related to people's destiny. I believe that Egypt and the other Arab states should follow the example of such states as Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia which developed their national economy very quickly. Today, the power of states is measured by their national income, not by early-warning systems.

['Aql] This part of the world, like many other parts, is facing religious extremism, which poses a threat to stability and balance. Do you think this extremism jeopardizes peace, particularly since accusations in this regard are being leveled at states like Iran?

[Peres] None of the religions that came from Abraham were extremist; they never called for violence or bloodshed. On the contrary, it was Abraham who called for an open tent on all sides for receiving guests. Religious extremism calls for violence and killing, and does not represent Abraham or God the Almighty. There is competition in Iran between self-destruction or suicide on the one hand, and sabotage and the destruction of others on the other, and I do not know which will come first. At any rate, Khomenyi's approach did not provide the appropriate solutions for the Iranian people; on the contrary, he caused destruction for other countries. Iran is lying. It is encouraging violence, spreading terrorism, and financing sabotage organizations, hoping at the same time that God will forgive it, but He will not.

['Aql] Your statement that peace is more important than winning the elections is met with deep interest in the Arab world, coupled with concern and wondering about the fate of this peace if the Israeli Government changes. Is this concern justified?

[Peres] There is no justification for this concern. Those who are worried about peace are called upon to uphold peace, recognize Israel, and establish normal relations with it. As you know, people either pray in a mosque or in a synagogue. However, in politics, they establish relations with each other. We on our part encountered many difficulties to arrive at peace. My senior partner, the late Prime Minister Rabin, did not worry, and continued his drive for peace. I am committed to this course and I will not worry, either. The Arab world is called upon to work seriously for the sake of peace and to help the Palestinian National [as published] Authority, which so far, has not received sufficient aid from the Arab world.

['Aql] Rabin had previously promised to hold a popular referendum before withdrawing from the Golan. Will you honor this promise?

[Peres] I respect all my predecessor Yitzhaq Rabin's promises, including issues on which I disagreed with him. Rabin was assassinated, and I am now responsible for honoring all his commitments. However, the upcoming elections may obviate the need for a referendum.

Beilin Comments on Talks With Syria

TA2912183495 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 29 Dec 95

[Interview with Economy and Planning Minister Yosi Beilin by Shlomo Ganor on 29 December; place not given — recorded in Hebrew with Arabic subtitles; processed from the Hebrew]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Ganor] Sir, what are your impressions following two days of talks between Israel and Syria?

[Beilin] I have a positive impression. Not enough time has elapsed. One cannot announce a breakthrough after

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a mere two days. However, it can be said that these are a completely different type of negotiations. Much less formal and strict. There is a readiness on both sides to demonstrate procedural flexibility. At the time, Israel insisted on a certain type of negotiations in a specific field. This time we said let's talk about everything. In the past, the Syrians said that they would only negotiate through the Americans and never directly with Israel. They even said that they would not say hello or shake our hands. That too is a thing of the past. These talks are like a mini Camp David. They are very intensive. There are many informal moments after the delegations conclude their talks and I view this in itself as very positive. It may even lead to a substantive breakthrough but this has not occurred yet.

[Ganor] What are the talks at the Wye Plantation concentrating on, procedural matters or have the sides already started discussing substantive issues?

[Beilin] In the beginning, we thought that the first round of the talks would deal merely with the procedural aspect. In other words, how the talks would be held and for how long, with the negotiators then flying home to discuss the continuation of the talks with their respective leaderships. I can now say that the focus is not exclusively on the procedural aspect and that there has certainly been some discussion of substantive issues. I would not describe these as negotiations, but the substantive issues — mainly the nature of normalization, security arrangements, and withdrawal — have definitely been raised I think both within the framework of formal and informal talks. Today, both parties have more of a feeling about the expectations of their respective interlocuters.

[Ganor] Has the Israeli delegation heard new or surprising statements from the Syrian side?

[Beilin] I cannot point to any real surprise in the talks with the exception of the positive atmosphere which characterizes them. The atmosphere is one of intensive U.S. involvement, encouragement by the Syrian media and leadership, and a lack of formality on the part of the negotiators. These are the three most interesting developments that emerged this week. Only time will tell whether this will also lead to a substantive change.

[Ganor] You expressed doubts about Damascus' readiness to make a strategic decision right up to the very opening of the talks.

[Beilin] I very much hope that there has been a change in Syria. I see a change in the media and in the public statements made by Syrian officials. I am not discounting this. I still cannot state that I have witnessed a substantive change in Syria's basic demands from Israel — demands which are very hard for us to accept at the very least. However, the fact that I have not discerned such a development does not mean that it has not happened nor that it will not occur in the near future.

[Ganor] What does Israel hope to achieve at the end of the first week of talks?

[Beilin] We are fast approaching the moment of truth. Four years of negotiations have been mostly wasted by unnecessary dilly- dallying. And I permit myself to say that the fault does not lay with the Israeli side. Today we are nearing elections in the United States and Israel. I cannot see the negotiations continuing for another year. We are talking about several months. I believe that decisions will have to be made in the course of next month, January 1996, following the two rounds of talks in Maryland and Secretary of State Christopher's visit to the region. We will have to reach a difficult decision on whether to pursue intensive talks, thus perhaps reaching a breakthough or an agreement, or to put the issue off for quite some time.

[Ganor] When you speak about difficult decisions are you referring to an Israeli declaration next month on withdrawal from the Golan Heights?

[Beilin] I do not think that that is what we should necessarily expect, perhaps not at all. I do not think that in negotiations, you have to accept the other side's positions and this is equally true for both us and the Syrians. Negotiations mean sitting down seriously together to resolve all the sensitive issues which have been put off until now and to decide where we are going from here. Each country's leadership will put the issue to their people. I hope that this is possible. I believe that if it happens we are talking about a new chapter in the Middle East and an end to the era of wars.

[Ganor] Do you expect this to happen in 1996?

[Beilin] I have no doubt that if we succeed in holding intensive negotiations from the procedural standpoint, we will also be able to wrap things up in the course of 1996, because the parameters of the permanent arrangement between Syria and Israel are known to both parties. On the other hand, if we fail to reach a procedural breakthrough at this stage, then we will be unable to reach any kind of agreement during 1996.

[Ganor] Mr. Beilin, what role have the Americans played after two days of talks?

[Beilin] We neither limited nor encouraged them. We told them that if they wanted to help they were welcome. On the one hand, the Americans are staying involved while on the other hand the U.S. officials are also trying

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to let us negotiate with the Syrians in Maryland without their involvement being noticeable at every turn.

[Ganor] Have the Syrian and Israeli delegations broken the ice?

[Beilin] Yes, I think you can say that.

[Ganor] Dr. Beilin, thank you very much.

Article: Ministers Oppose Peres, Syria Moves, U.S. Role

TA2912182895 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV (SHABAT supplement) in Hebrew 29 Dec 95 p7

[Article by Ben Kaspit: "Minister Mikha Harish: 'I Will Not Vote for Getting Off the Golan Heights"]

[FBIS Translated Text] It is too early to speak about an organized group. So far, there is only a quiet, invisible, inner unrest under the surface. The days of grace Shim'on Peres was given after Yitzhaq Rabin's murder are not over yet, but it is clear today more than ever that they will not last indefinitely. Particularly not if it becomes apparent that the recent reports regarding Israel's willingness to make concessions on the Golan issue are true. A possible breakthrough on the Syrian track that would include an Israeli agreement to fully withdraw on the Golan Heights within a relatively short period, will send Peres — anew and all at once — on a head-on confrontation with the remains of the Rabin camp. Clearly, the encounter will not be heartwarming.

And we are talking the cabinet here, Peres' cabinet: Efrayim Sne, Mikha Harish, Ya'aqov Tzur, and Shim'on Shetrit. This is an updated list of Labor ministers who do not favor the idea of a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights. They favor the recent media reports even less.

In the meantime, they wait. They talk on the phone, hold meetings of two persons at the most, shift in their chairs with unease, monitor the negotiations, and deliver speeches in remote party branches, hoping Hafiz al-Asad will do the dirty work for them. In other words, they hope it becomes clear, and as soon as possible, that there is no progress, no breakthrough, and no full ceding of the Golan Heights. Otherwise, they will be forced to do something, which will put an end to the domestic quiet in the party, Knesset faction, and cabinet. Unless some dramatic change takes place, none of the above-mentioned ministers will raise his hand in the cabinet session in support of a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, within 18 months, and without early warning stations.

Efrayim Sne: "I want this to be clear: The negotiations with Syria resumed only thanks to our flexibility. It is now Syria's turn to be flexible. The gap between our stands is very wide. We made procedural adjustments; it is their turn to make substantial adjustments — otherwise, there will be no progress."

Kaspit: "What are your red lines?"

Sne: "My stand has not changed. I have always been consistent. Even if everybody else change their position or the entire political map shifts, I stay where I am. For me, there are four points that I will not budge on: a defensible border; full normalization; a long withdrawal; and the water sources in our hands — plain and simple."

For the record, Sne stresses that he will not engage in arguments with anyone, definitely not with the prime minister. His associates know, however, that he is very worried about the situation. "I am a Rabinist," Sne told his associates, "and I do not mind remaining the last of them."

Sne is not accepting the theory that the recent Israeli move was agreed on by Peres and Rabin on the eve of the murder. "Speaking at the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee three days before he was assassinated," Sne recalls, "Rabin cited the agreement with Egypt as an example." Rabin said: "We sat on the al-'Arish-Ra's Muhammad line for more than two years after opening an embassy in Cairo." According to Sne, Rabin said that if we got this from Egypt, there is no reason we should not have the same from Syria. On the other hand, Sne is not alarmed. "The newspaper reports are full of psychological warfare. One must not rush into conclusions. So far, Syria has not changed, the Middle East has not changed, the topography has not changed — why should I change?"

Ya'aqov Tzur holds a similar view. "I believe that the security arrangements with Syria should be independent and unrelated to the normalization. I know, and it hurts me to say this, that a peace agreement with Syria will require a withdrawal from large parts of the Golan Heights. At the same time, I believe that the water issue should be kept off the table and not be part of the territorial issue. We must not give up on the water resources, in any event. Water has been flowing from the Golan to the Lake Tiberias reservoir since time immemorial, regardless of the Six Day War, and that is the way it should stay."

Tzur is not enthusiastic about the U.S. mediation or the possibility of striking a defense pact with the United States. "The security arrangements should come with a minimalist U.S. backing. No agreement between us and the United States could replace appropriate security arrangements. As a rule, the process should be between us and Syria, not with the mediation of a third party.

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This model has worked before, and it stands the best chances to succeed in the future as well."

Here is what Industry and Trade Minister Mikha Harish had to say: "I will not vote in favor of a withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Period." Harish is referring, of course, to his vote in the cabinet. When it comes to the Knesset, everyone stressed that they would bow to party discipline, albeit with a heavy and broken heart.

Harish: "I was among those who pressured Rabin to hold a national referendum on the Golan Heights issue, and I cannot go back on that. I cannot hide the fact that I am concerned. However, in each of the previous peace agreements we signed, I asked myself a simple question: What happens if the regime in the country we reached peace with falls from power? In the Palestinian case, such a development would not pose a threat to our existence? The same is true with regard to Egypt and Jordan. With Syria, however, the situation is different. If the regime changes in Damascus with the Syrians sitting on top of the Heights, then we have a problem. They have a large army with chemical and biological weapons and more Scud missiles than Saddam Husayn ever had. I am not one of those who consider territory to be of marginal significance in the missile age. I think it is very important to be near the area from where the missiles are launched, in order to take them out."

Harish is astonished by the media debate over whether Israel should withdraw to the international border or to the lines of 4 June 1967. "I find this debate questionable. As far as I am concerned, the international border is just as irrelevant. What is this? Have we already tried everything else? What about the Syrian presence in Lebanon? After all, we swapped territory with Jordan, and we can try the same thing with the Syrians. We can give up something here in exchange for something there. I do not subscribe to the popular impression of al-Asad as some kind of negotiating superman who cannot be budged."

Of all people, Shim'on Shetrit, the bad boy of the cabinet, has chosen to remain silent now. Shetrit holds a particularly hawkish view of withdrawal from the Golan Heights. His close associates vow that he will not support such a pullout. Nevertheless, Shetrit has annoyed Peres too many times over the past few weeks. He prefers to put off the next confrontation for as long as possible.

Incidentally, trouble can suddenly loom from other directions. For example, Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan is currently preparing a position paper on the issue of a potential agreement with Syria. Dayan, who consults with officials at the Foreign Ministry's Political Research and Policy Planning Departments, will soon deliver a paper ruling out a full withdrawal on the Golan Heights to the political echelon. "I am trying to delineate the lines of an agreement that the Israeli public will be able to live with," Dayan told MA'ARIV this week. "In that respect, the 4 June 1967 borders are out of the question. The international border will also have to be modified."

As of today, the government has managed to maintain industrial quiet. None of those mentioned in this article have rejected the current negotiations with Syria. At least not publicly. On the other hand, none of them believe in the purity of Syria's intentions. They prefer to wait, hoping that the government has not embarked on a path of internal collision.

"Imagine what will happen," one of the ministers said, "if Peres agrees to implement a complete withdrawal within 18 months, without Israeli early warning stations or adequate demilitarization arrangements. Do you know what the Likud will do to us? Look at the public relations lineup they are building: "[Reserve Major General and former Northern Command Commander] Yitzhaq Mordekhay and maybe Yosi Peled [another former Northern Command commander]. These two will be backed up by Qahalani [a reserves brigadier general and Yom Kippur war hero on the Syrian front]. I think the public will believe them. I think our party will be clobbered during the voting if we try and pass such an agreement. All this without mentioning the blow we will receive on the battlefield if God forbid, something happens in the future."

In the meantime, Shim'on Peres is far from such developments. After all, nothing has really happened yet. As far as he is concerned, all the media reports are merely empty, hollow, test balloons. Until Peres recognizes Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights from the Knesset podium, it is all just a waste of time and energy. All the timetables published in the media and the speculation about Israel waiving its demand for early warning stations have never been confirmed by any of Peres' associates.

"It is really too early," one of Peres' associates said. "Besides, one should remember the story about Moshe Dayan. A short time after asserting that Sharm al-Shaykh without peace was preferable to peace without Sharm al-Shaykh, Dayan met al-Tuhami and immediately agreed to give up all the Sinai Peninsula. Seventy percent of the Israeli public were opposed to giving back the Sinai, and 70% of the same public were in favor of its return a short time later. Do you remember al-Sadat's visit to Jerusalem? Do you remember its tremendous impact? Now imagine a similar visit by al-Asad. Anyway, we have not given up anything yet. It

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is all speculation. The negotiations have not begun. So really, what is everyone talking about here?"

Ben-Eli'ezer on Solution in Lebanon, Syria Talks

TA3012130995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0805 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Telephone interview with Construction and Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eli'ezer by Eytan Almog; place not given — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Almog] Mr. Minister, let us open with the katyusha attack in the north. We are currently holding talks with Syria in what appears to be an improved atmosphere. As a member of the inner cabinet, can you tell me what is happening here?

[Ben-Eli'ezer] Look, along our northern border things continue as though nothing new has happened. I have no doubt that sooner or later we will have to present Syria with firm demands. I agree with Minister Sne that this will be one of the most significant tests in our relations with Syria. One thing, however, must be absolutely clear and we should stop dodging this fact: Nobody must harbor any illusions that the internal situation in Lebanon can be changed by military means. In my opinion there is only one way which can lead to the calm and security which our northern residents so deserve, namely, via peace arrangements which Syria — which is the party for dealing with the Lebanese issue. Obviously we cannot remain indifferent to the plight and tragedy of our northern residents, but we must not lose our coolheadedness for even one second. The path we have to follow is absolutely clear and everything depends on us. I will not go into all the operations and wars we have conducted in the north over the years. Nothing will change, however, unless we completely change our direction.

[Almog] How do you perceive our final border with Syria?

[Ben-Eli'ezer] Look, we must try to ascertain what the meaning of normalization is between us and Syria. We must not harbor any illusions that Syria will compromise with us or will concede anything, and this means we may have to make extremely painful concessions....

[Almog, interrupting] It seems as though Syria does not intend to give up its demand for the 4 June 1967 border.

[Ben-Eli'ezer] I would prefer to leave this issue for the time being....

[Almog, interrupting] It does not seem as though al-Asad has any intention of letting go of this issue.

[Ben-Eli'ezer] I am not convinced there will be no surprises here. I think, however, that at the present time something else is happening in our talks with Syria. The ties have been loosened and the parties are talking in a different atmosphere and style. Different tunes can be heard, and for the first time there is a feeling that the two delegations are trying to deal with the fundamental issues once and for all.

For me, the crucial thing is to deal with the substance of normalization and mutual relations, with the issues of water and security which are so vital for us. These are the questions that must be answered, and if the answers directly serve Israel's security needs, then I say any price is worthwhile. [passage omitted]

Christopher To Visit in 11 Days; Perry To Follow

TA0101073296 (Internet) 'Arutz 7 News Service in English 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] 'Arutz-7 has gained knowledge of a planned trip of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Israel eleven days from now, in an effort to summarize the understandings reached during the current Israeli-Syrian talks.

According to Yehoshu'a Me'iri, 'Arutz-7's Arab affairs correspondent, there is a document in the making in which Israel will agree to full withdrawal from the Golan in exchange for a Syrian commitment to peace and normalization of relations.

Secretary of Defense William Perry will join Christopher several days later to discuss with Israeli leaders the forming of a strategic defense pact between Israel and the United States. Perry will visit the Golan during his visit.

Paper: Clinton President 'Who Would Not Give Up'

TA3112093995 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 31 Dec 95 p 2

[Editorial: "Clinton's Year"]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the spring of 1995, the Federal Building in Oklahoma City was blown up. The horrible blast marked the peak of the smear and hate campaign against President Bill Clinton and the Democratic administration. Six months earlier, the Democratic Party had suffered a major defeat in the congressional elections. Clinton himself was perceived by many Americans as a weak and indecisive president, suspected of moral and financial corruption. Many Americans believed that in the time that remained till the end of his term, Clinton would not rise again and would remain a lame and ugly duck.

But Clinton did not despair and did not fence himself in inside his White House. Just like Rabin, his master

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and teacher, Clinton pursued the missions he had set for himself. He went out to the field to fight tough political and personal battles. He took financial and social initiatives on the domestic front and made international peace moves, and he succeeded in most, against all odds. With his own two hands and with the help of a few friends, he managed to turn public opinion around: Today, Clinton is a well-liked and popular President. His potential rivals for the Presidency lag far behind in the polls, and he manages to bend even the arrogant Congress.

The year 1995 was very good for the United States. It scored giant achievements in economic and social affairs, foreign policy, and peacemaking — all of which were achieved by Clinton, the President who would not give up, the 1995 international man of the year.

2 Katyusha Salvos on Galilee; Officials React

TA3012120995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0500 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Two salvos of katyusha rockets fell on the Galilee Panhandle overnight, forcing residents to spend the night in bomb shelters. There were no injuries. A number of houses and other property sustained damage. The north remains on alert. The Hizballah claimed responsibility for the attack from Lebanon, saying it was reprisal for Israeli shelling in south Lebanon yesterday morning, in which one terrorist was killed and three civilians wounded.

The shelling followed an earlier mortar attack by Hizballah units on an SLA [South Lebanese Army] outpost in the security zone. Mortar fire was directed at an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and SLA outpost in the western sector of the security zone last night. No one was injured. A missile was also fired at an Israeli tank, but missed. Israeli and SLA units returned fire.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 0805 GMT on 30 December includes a related report in which Health Minister Efrayim Sne is recorded as saying: "We must make it clear to Syria that curbing Hizballah in south Lebanon is a test of his seriousness in seeking an arrangement. It is incomprehensible that they tell us to make peace with them on the Golan front as a condition for curbing Hizballah in Lebanon. The opposite should be the case: first they must curb Hizballah in Lebanon and then we will know that Syria is serious."

[Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew at 0800 GMT on 30 December includes a report on the katyusha attack adding: "Israel will not be able to tolerate a situation where the negotiations with Syria are pursued while katyushas continue to fall in northern Israel. This was said by Israeli Ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich, who told our correspondent Drora Perl that the U.S. Administration has urgently asked Syria to put an end to the katyusha attacks."

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1100 GMT 30 Deccember reports: "The Prime Minister's Bureau issued a sharp reaction to the katyusha attack in the Galilee. The bureau issued a statement in which it said that Israel will do everything possible to protect the settlements in the north and will react to the katyusha attacks appropriately. Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz adds that following the attack, Israel asked the United States to act via Syria to restrain Hizballah.

["Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu said that last night's katyusha attack — coming during the negotiations with Syria — shows that Syria is using Hizballah's katyushas to pressure Israel into giving up the Golan Heights. Netanyahu maintains that Syria will continue pressuring Israel in the same manner whenever it wants to obtain other things, such as the water of Lake Tiberias or other vital assets.

["Qiryat Shemona Mayor Prosper 'Azran called on the government to react sharply to every katyusha attack and to cause the Lebanese residents living north of the security zone to abandon their homes and march all the way up to Beirut."]

IDF: Attacks Could Have Halted Talks

TA3012195795 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Studio talk between anchorperson Sari Raz and Army affairs correspondent Alon Ben-David — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Raz] Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' last night promised his U.S. counterpart Warren Christopher that he would take steps to prevent an exacerbation of the situation along Israel's northern border. Al-Shar', however, also called for restraint on Israel's part.

Our Arab affairs correspondent Ehud Ya'ari reports that Christopher woke al-Shar' at 0100 [2300 GMT], immediately after the katyusha rockets landed, in order to tell him that the timing of the attack against the Galilee Panhandle could not have been worse. Our correspondent adds that it turns out that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] shelling of the village of Qabrikha yesterday was a mistake. As a result of the shelling, Hizballah considered itself justified in retaliating. IDF artillery shelled numerous targets in the security zone's eastern sector today, and security sources said that Israel would not be able to continue absorbing katyusha attacks. The sources noted that Syria once again failed to take any action to stop the katyusha attacks against

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the Galilee. Our army affairs correspondent Alon Ben-David is in the studio. Good evening.

[Ben-David] Good evening. This morning, IDF sources described last night's attack as murderous. Hizballah intended to cause fatalities among the residents of Qiryat Shemona. Very luckily, there were no casualties; however, things could have easily turned out differently. Had citizens been hurt in the katyusha volleys, Israel could not have just continued the talks with Syria as though nothing had happened. [passage omitted]

[Ben-David] The IDF moved additional artillery pieces into Lebanon this evening. This is not part of any significant reinforcement of the Israeli presence but merely standing procedure following a katyusha attack. At this stage, Israel does not intend to initiate an offensive in south Lebanon which could undermine the negotiations wit? Syria. IDF sources said today that while they would try to avoid harming Lebanese civilians — thus denying the terrorists any pretext for firing rockets at the Galilee — Hizballah should bear in mind that regardless of the political negotiations, Israel's patience has its limits. [passage omitted]

Baraq Comments on Katyusha Attacks, Syria Talks

TA3012202995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 2000 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq has said that if the katyusha attacks from Lebanon continue, Israel will have to consider its reaction. The Lebanese Government in Beirut is responsible for restraining Hizballah, Baraq pointed out, and Israel expects the Syrians to exert their influence on Beirut concerning this matter.

As for the negotiations with Syria, the foreign minister expressed cautious optimism but stressed that long and complex negotiations still lay ahead. Israel will insist on the necessary security arrangements, full normalization, and the practical implementation of the latter.

This was reported by our correspondent Shlomo Raz.

Increase in Hizballah Activity Noted; Iran Blamed

TA3112070495 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0505 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Defense establishment sources said over the weekend that Hizballah fire at IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and SLA [South Lebanese Army] posts has increased over the past few weeks. Last month, there were 50 incidents. It is believed that Iran has been encouraging Hizballah to expand the scope of its activity in order to impede the talks with Syria. Our army affairs correspondent Karmela Menashe reports:

[Begin Menashe recording] Last year, there were 550 terror attacks in the north, mostly with Sagger missiles, mortars, and katyushas. Terror squads also infiltrated the security zone to plant roadside bombs, set ambushes, and try to seize posts. These figures clearly indicate a gradual increase in Hizballah activity. According to senior IDF officers, Hizballah is continuing to expand its infrastructure in south Lebanon and is acquiring experience, improving, and perpetrating more attacks.

Sources in the Northern Command do not doubt that Hizballah launched the katyusha attack on 29 December with the intention of harming civilians in Qiryat Shemona. The hits were accurate. Had civilians been hurt, the negotiations with Syria would have stopped, a senior security source said. The IDF believes that the Syrians are not involved in the shooting, but there seems to be no particular effort on their part to prevent it either.

It is believed that Iran has been encouraging Hizballah to intensify its activity, especially while talks with the Syrians are under way, in an attempt to harm the process. A security source made it clear, however, that the intensification of the attacks also reflects internal Lebanese struggles in anticipation of the upcoming elections there and a possible political settlement. [end recording]

[A related report by Ilan Ro'e on the same newsreel adds: "IDF sources again stressed over the weekend that the person who was killed in the Lebanese village of Qabrikha had definitely been identified as a terrorist." The report adds that "senior officers in the Northern Command" are "angry and often frustrated" over the fact that Hizballah is firing from inside inhabited villages. "They say that Hizballah is lying through its teeth; the katyusha fire was not provoked in any way." "In any event, IDF sources say, Syria was not party to the katyusha fire this time. It was exclusively a Hizballah initiative, decided on by the highest echelons."]

Shahaq: Hizballah View of Accords 'Unacceptable'

TA3112112695 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Lieutenant General Amnon Shahaq, chief of staff, told the cabinet today that Syria can do more to prevent Hizballah activity in Lebanon. He added that the Hizballah interpretation of the agreements attained in the wake of Operation Accountability are totally unacceptable to us. On the other hand, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres said that the issue is not clear. Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq said that we should demand that Lebanon take steps against Hizballah.

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Peres: Operation Against Hizballah 'Impractical'

TA3112191195 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The understandings that have been achieved with Hizballah in the wake of Operation Accountability are vague. This was said today by Prime Minister Shim'on Peres in a meeting with members of the Qiryat Shemona municipality. Our correspondent Shlomi Eldar reports Mr. Peres as noting that a military operation against Hizballah is impractical at the present time, although there are appropriate contingency plans.

Baraq: Understandings With Hizballah May Be Reconsidered

TA0101080296 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0500 GMT 1 Jan 96

[Report on interview with Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq by political correspondent Udi Segal; place and date not given — italicized passages recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Segal] Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq issued a sharp warning to Lebanon following the escalation on Israel's northern border and said Israel would react firmly. In an interview with IDF Radio, Baraq said that since the Syrians can prevent an escalation, they are indirectly responsible for the situation, although he placed the blame itself on the Lebanese Government, which is sovereign in south Lebanon, and as such, is responsible. Baraq spoke of an erosion of the understandings on south Lebanon achieved in the wake of Operation Accountability.

[Baraq] *Hizballah's interpretation of the understandings has eroded and shifted to directions that did not exist in the original understandings. A similar erosion was the cause for Operation Accountability; at that time, they tried to force us into a situation we could not tolerate.*

There is a reason for the foreign minister's argument that Lebanon is responsible. In military terms, if Israel launches a strong retaliation, it would be directed at Lebanon, and the casualties would be Lebanese. Politically, it makes no sense for Israel to supply the Syrians with another negotiating card in the form of control over south Lebanese terrorism.

Baraq, who was the chief of staff when the understandings on south Lebanese operations were formulated, told us for the first time that these understandings may have to be reconsidered:

[Baraq] *It seems we will have to reassess the situation if these kinds of violations of the understandings continue.*

A similarly resolute tone characterizes the foreign minister's observations on the negotiations with Syria. These are merely preliminary explorations, and we can expect protracted and complicated negotiations, Baraq said at the end of the first round of talks in the United States. We have yet to receive answers as to whether the Syrians are ready to provide the peace package we are demanding.

[Baraq] *I hope we will be able to say in a few days or weeks that we have a negotiating partner, but at this point, I cannot say that with any degree of certainty. We are not rushing ahead. We do not have a deadline, and we do not intend to reach an agreement at any cost.*

The Syrians have to understand that only if we receive serious answers to the spectrum of issues that interest us — normalization, water, security arrangements, and economic cooperation — will we be prepared to discuss the depth of withdrawal, Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq said.

IDF Considering Dirigibles for Early Warning

TA0201072596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'ei in English 0500 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] is seriously weighing the possibility of using airborne dirigibles as early warning stations over its border with Syria. Israel Television reported that the dirigibles would carry photographic and audio equipment, as well as a small crew.

Syria has rejected Israel's demand for ground-based early warning stations on the Golan Heights as part of any peace deal. Each dirigible is reported to cost about $10 million.

Or: Withdrawal If Lebanese Prevent Hostile Activity

TA0201101496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0900 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Deputy Defense Minister Ori Or said that if the Lebanese Government proves it is capable of taking responsibility to prevent hostile activity against Israel, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will withdraw from the security zone leaving the border safe and quiet.

Or made the remarks during a tour of the northern border this morning. The deputy defense minister reiterated that there is no agreement with the Syrians that restricts activity against Hizballah.

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Foreign Ministers' Visits to Orient House Banned

TA0201122396 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan said Israel will not permit foreign ministers visiting Israel to visit Orient House in East Jerusalem. Deputy Minister Dayan believes Israel can physically prevent these visits.

Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that Minister Dayan made the remarks at a meeting with Israeli ambassadors to Europe who have come here for consultations.

Israelis Temporarily Banned From Tulkarm, Qalqilyah

TA3012165895 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1500 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] has forbidden Israelis to enter the Qalqilyah and Tulkarm areas until further notice.

The reason for the ban is Palestinian Authority [PA] Chairman Yasir 'Arafat's expected visit to these towns. The prohibition order goes into effect immediately. Our correspondent Dani Zaqen reports that Yasir 'Arafat is currently holding a PA session in Ramallah.

Change Noted in 'Arafat's Tone

TA0201121896 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 2 Jan 96 pp A1, A2

[Report by Eytan Rabin]

[FBIS Translated Text] Palestinian Authority [PA] Chairman Yasir 'Arafat has recently toned down his comments about Jerusalem, after receiving messages from top Israeli echelons. During his recent visits to West Bank towns, 'Arafat referred to Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian people. Senior Israeli sources delivered a message to him that Israel holds a grave view of these remarks.

Visiting Qalqilyah and Tulkarm last week, 'Arafat indeed toned down his remarks and hardly mentioned Jerusalem. Defense establishment analysts, however, believe that 'Arafat will again comment on the issue, after the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] redeployment in the West bank, including Hebron, is completed and after the elections in the territories are held.

The defense establishment, the Central Command, and the Prison Service are currently discussing the lists of some 1,500-1,800 Palestinian prisoners and detainees slated to be released on 18 January. In a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office last week, it has been decided that prisoners convicted of murdering or injuring Jews will not be released, but prisoners or detainees charged with murdering or injuring collaborators will. In addition, the following will be released:

— 200 prisoners suspected of murdering Palestinians they had suspected of being collaborators.
— 28 prisoners who injured other Palestinians with firearms. They will only be released into a PA custody.
— 500 prisoners convicted of misdemeanors such as membership in hostile organizations.
— 190 criminal convicts
— some 100 pre-trial detainees, charged with misdemeanors.

The ministerial committee further decided that the 20 Palestinian female prisoners who refused to be set free in the previous round, will be released without having to sign a document [pledging not to engage in activity against the peace process]. If they refuse to be released this time as well, they will be deported to the PA areas. "This time, we will simply take them and drop them inside the PA areas," a defense source said.

It has been reported that the defense establishment no longer opposes the release of five Palestinian women convicted of murdering Israelis. Their files are being held by President 'Ezer Weizman who refused to release them in the past, but may reconsider.

IDF and defense establishment sources say that changes may be made in the list of prisoners to be released to include members of the rejectionist organizations. The sources say that this may be done to bolster support for 'Arafat in the territories. Over the past several weeks, official Jordanian and Egyptian elements have been filing requests for the release of prisoners, claiming it would strengthen the peace process.

The defense establishment has decided to publish the list of prisoners, mainly those involved in murders, ahead of time expecting Supreme Court petitions to be filed against some cases. The establishment expects that if the petitions are dealt with early, the legal process could be completed by 18 January.

Defense establishment sources also expressed satisfaction with their cooperation with the PA in the war on terrorism. The sources said that the Palestinians are fighting terror squads, exposing organizations, and eliminating "terror pockets." According to recent reports, there is a correlation between the PA activity and the drop in terror incidents.

In 1995, there were eight suicide attacks, all by Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad members. Forty nine Israeli civilians and soldiers were killed

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in terror attacks. Compared with the previous years, there has been a significant drop in the number of terror incidents both in Israel and in the territories.

Hundreds of Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists were arrested last year, 17 shooting incidents were solved, and many terror squads in the West Bank were uncovered. Israel currently holds in detention some 3,000 activists of fanatic Islamic movements who are charged with terroristic activity. Three car-bomb attacks were aborted last year, and two suicide attacks were prevented even before the terrorists left the Gaza Strip.

Peres Against Paying Palestinians for Damages

TA0101113696 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Peres asserts that Israel is not responsible for damages inflicted on Palestinians during the intifadah. That war was forced on Israel, the prime minister said, and each side should endure its damage. We have also incurred damage, he added. The prime minister made these remarks during consultations at his bureau this morning on the Palestinian damage claims totaling hundreds of millions of shekels, which have been submitted to Israeli courts.

Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that Attorney General Mikha'el Ben-Ya'ir disagreed with Mr. Peres. Ben-Ya'ir maintained that Palestinian claims cannot be forestalled, and a financial settlement should be arranged.

The discussion was not concluded today, and it will continue next week.

Peres on Need To Double Palestinian Permits

TA3112111495 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1005 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Report by political correspondent Shlomo Raz]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Briefing the cabinet today, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres expressed deep appreciation for the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] General Staff and the Central Command for their performance in the evacuation of the West Bank cities. At the same time, he praised the settlers in the territories, saying their conduct was quite reasonable. He also praised the Construction and Housing Ministry and the Public Works Department for building the bypass roads. In general, it seemed that Peres was trying to improve the atmosphere in the cabinet session today after he, too, had heard the disgruntled — though so far restrained — remarks by ministers and others about the cabinet sessions' having become an unimportant tool.

Peres made some more interesting and important — though not really new — remarks, and I am quoting from the minutes of the session: I am support separation between the nations, Peres said with respect to the negotiations with the Palestinians, but not territorial separation. A fence will be built where security dictates; however, rewards and not only fences should be created. There is an interesting opportunity to establish new, neighborly relations. This means that, in practical terms, Peres is not in favor of a clear, unequivocal physical separation. [passage omitted]

Peres also spoke — and again I am reading from the minutes — about a carrot-and-stick policy: rewards for cooperation, mainly with regard to open ties and economic issues; and sanctions against anyone who violates the agreement.

It has become apparent that the number of Palestinian laborers in Israel is double that permitted. So far, some 50,000 work permits have been issued, while the actual number of Palestinians currently working in Israel stands at 100,000. Shim'on Peres said that it is no use to ignore this and that the figure should be made legal, adding that we should not turn a blind eye to this. Palestinians who work in Israel bring approximately $600 million into the territories annually, which is much more than all the international donations put together. Another interesting piece of data: Israel's imports from Gaza amount to $80 million annually, and it exports $40 million worth of goods to the Strip.

Peres reiterated that Israel is responsible for the security of the settlers in Judaea and Samaria, saying that we will not be flexible on issues relating to terror and violence but will not change our policy. [passage omitted]

Speaking on the Syrian issue, Peres said there are gaps between Israel and Syria, mainly with regard to the direction of peace. He stressed strongly that peace should be given an economic backing. Security without economy means cold peace, Peres said, according to the minutes. We need economic guarantees alongside the security guarantees. He also told the ministers that Ambassador al-Mu'allim, head of the Syrian delegation, said that al-Asad was deeply impressed by the 10-point list, which includes the economic issue. [passage omitted]

Ministry To Sell 700 Housing Units in West Bank

TA3112100895 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 31 Dec 95 p 16

[Report by 'Ofer Petersburg]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The government has decided to "thaw" some 700 apartment and cottages in Ari'el

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which have been frozen for the past three years, since the Labor-led government came to power.

The Construction and Housing Ministry is about to put the 700 housing units on sale through the Shikun Ufituah Company, with the help of the Ari'el Local Council, headed by the Likud's Ron Nahman.

The housing units were built by the Africa-Israel, Dankner, Shechter, and Ashdar construction companies, as well as others, during the Likud government's term. When Labor came to power, all the construction works in Judaea and Samaria were frozen, and the Construction and Housing Ministry bought all the apartments these companies had built. [passage omitted]

Jordan's King Husayn To Tour Tel Aviv 10 Jan

TA0101073096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0600 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jordan's King Husayn will visit Tel Aviv on 10 January. He will inaugurate the Suresky Medical Center's trauma unit that will be named after Yitzhaq Rabin. After that, King Husayn will tour Tel Aviv streets, as well as the square where Yitzhaq Rabin was assassinated.

Our Dan District police affairs correspondent Shim'on Vilna'i reports that the police are making preparations for a special protection operation. A senior Tel Aviv police officer said the operation will resemble that undertaken during the U.S. President's visit. Hundreds of Israel Police, Border Police, and security forces personnel will be employed.

Peres Appoints Security Cabinet, Demands Secrecy

TA3112191495 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres today appointed a political security cabinet. The makeup of this cabinet is identical to the one that existed during Rabin's government. The new element consists in the fact that members of this cabinet will have to sign a secrecy statement. In addition to Peres himself, the members of the new cabinet are Ramon, Baraq, Qeysar, Shohat, Shahal, Ben-Eli'ezer, Tzaban, Aloni, and Segev. Ministers Beilin and Liba'i will serve in the cabinet in the capacity of observers.

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Israel's Foreign Minister Baraq Arrives in Amman

JN0201101596 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1000 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq arrived in Amman this morning on a short visit to Jordan during which he will have talks with ranking officials dealing with developments in the region, the peace process, and bilateral, regional, and international issues of joint interest.

He was received by Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, the Jordanian ambassador in Tel Aviv, and the Israeli ambassador in Amman.

Meets Bin-Shakir, al-Kabariti

JN0201170896 Amman PETRA-JNA in Arabic 1550 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, 2 Jan (PETRA) — His Excellency Prime Minister al-Sharif Zayd Bin-Shakir has asserted that Jordan is looking forward to a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region, incorporating all tracks in addition to the Jordanian-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli tracks.

He expressed hope that progress would continue on the Syrian-Israeli track, and that the Lebanese-Israeli track would also witness progress in order to entrench the peace process and achieve the aspirations of the region's states and peoples.

After receiving Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq in Amman today, his excellency the prime minister voiced Jordan's satisfaction with steps taken toward implementing the Palestinian-Israeli accord. He also stressed the need to reach a lasting and just solution that will return to the Palestinian people their legitimate rights on their soil.

For his part, Baraq stressed the importance the Israeli Government attaches to implementing the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, expressing hope that the treaty will be a model for the anticipated peaceful relationships in the region.

During the meeting, which was attended by Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, Jordanian Ambassador in Tel Aviv Marwan al-Mu'ashshir, economic secretary at the Prime Ministry Dr. Basim 'Awadallah, the Israeli ambassador in Amman, and the delegation accompanying Baraq, the two sides reviewed relations between the two countries and the agreements they have signed or will sign to promote joint cooperation in various fields in implementation of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

Speaking to reporters, Baraq said the Israeli side is satisfied with the level of cooperation between Jordan and Israel in the wake of the peace treaty. He added that agreements on transport, communications, cooperation between the al-'Aqabah and Elat regions, and cultural and academic ties will be signed shortly. He added: It is expected shortly that there will be a shift from the stage of agreements to a stage of building true peace between the two peoples.

Answering a question on Hizballah activities and Syria's role in reducing these activities, Baraq said: We think that Syria can reduce Hizballah activities if it wants to, however, we think that Hizballah is to blame in the first place. Hizballah must bear the consequences of its activities.

Baraq added: We think that a sovereign state on the other side of the security zone must assume its responsibility by reducing Hizballah activities. We expect the Syrians to use their influence on the Lebanese Government and Hizballah to do that.

Baraq went on: If Hizballah attacks continue, then Israel will reconsider its response. Israel will not remain silent if its northern cities continue to be attacked by Katyusha rockets.

Baraq said he briefed the prime minister and the foreign minister on the progress in Israeli contacts with the Palestinians. He added: We are committed to the agreements signed with the Palestinians, and we shall remain committed to them. We also expect the Palestinians to be our partners in fulfilling their commitments, especially their commitment to amending the Palestinian national charter in a way that does not conflict with the Palestinian-Israeli agreement and to stop demanding that the State of Israel be removed.

For his part, al-Kabariti said Jordan supports the Palestinian side and that Jordanian efforts are mainly devoted to making the Palestinian track succeed. Al-Kabariti denied there are any problems with the Palestinian side.

Al-Kabariti added: Jordan's role in the Palestinian-Israeli talks is supportive of Palestinian efforts. It does not go beyond this. Al-Kabariti hoped that the upcoming Palestinian elections will positively contribute toward advancing the peace process.

Asked if today's meetings with Baraq addressed His Majesty King Husayn's visit to Israel, al-Kabariti said: The general framework of the visit was discussed. As for the details, they will be discussed when Baraq meets with His Majesty King Husayn.

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Al-Kabariti on Baraq's Visit, Palestinian Forces

JN0201084696 Amman AL-ASWAQ in Arabic 2 Jan 96 p 1

[Report by Nasir 'Arif]

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq will visit Jordan today.

In a statement to AL-ASWAQ on the visit, Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti said the visit by the Israeli official, which is the first since he assumed his office, aims primarily at intensifying bilateral efforts to implement the agreements signed between Jordan and Israel in accordance with their peace treaty.

The foreign minister said the talks with the Israeli official will study the bilateral agreements that have not been signed so far, including the water agreement, the al-'Aqabah-Elat agreement, and the transportation agreement which is expected to be concluded next week.

Al-Kabariti said that following the conclusion of all cooperation agreements, the Jordanian and Israeli sides will work out joint action programs in various fields in coordination with the Palestinian side, especially in the economic field, and with the aim of intensifying cooperation in this sector.

The talks will follow up joint efforts aiming at enhancing the peace process in the region, especially in light of the press reports about the positive developments that took place on the Syrian-Israeli track which emphasize that the atmosphere of negotiations are optimistic that peace treaty would be signed by the two countries.

Al-Kabariti said the government is holding consultations with the Palestinian National Authority on the Palestine Liberation Army forces in Jordan.

The foreign minister, who was speaking to AL-ASWAQ, expressed hope that the consultations will lead to agreement on enabling these forces to play their aspired role in the security and stability of the self-rule areas.

Al-Kabariti Comments on Iraq, Regional Relations

MM2912155195 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 29 Dec 95 p 6

[Report on interview with Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti by Shihadah Abu-Baqar in Amman; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] Jordanian Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti has stated that Jordan has faced much injustice but always had a sense of pan-Arab responsibility which it felt it must shoulder. He called for a new Arab era of fraternal relations and cooperation. He said: I believe that there is a crisis of trust in the Arab world. To put it more frankly, I believe that we fear one another and none of us wants the other to say or do anything because one feels, wrongly, that any utterance or action by the other would be at the expense of his own share of words and deeds. Hence the dualism and contradiction which sometimes appears between words and deeds. He said that federalism is originally an Iraqi idea but the choice is up to the Iraqis, not us; what concerns us is the preservation of Iraq's unity. He pointed out that Jordan played a part in [UN] Resolution 986 on the sale of oil, but we were surprised by the way Iraq reacted to the resolution.

This came in an interview with AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT, mostly on Iraq, the Iraqi opposition, and Jordan's hosting of its [Iraqi opposition] conference. It also covered the [Jordanian] position on the Syrian-Israeli negotiations.

Al-Kabariti said: I wish first to sincerely emphasize the fact that this country (Jordan) has faced injustice for a long time.... Its inevitable destiny has put it at the heart of events and, therefore, at no time could it just say a few words and move on. He added: "May God spare the faithful the evil of fighting." Jordan is always affected by what goes on in the region and, on the other hand, it has always had a sense of pan-Arab duty which it felt it must perform in support of what is right and what it believes to be best for all.

The Jordanian minister added: In the light of these facts, Jordan has faced much injustice and the truth about its stands has appeared clearly but after a while. That is why it pleases us in Jordan, at the official as well as the popular levels, to say that time has always given us credit.

Al-Kabariti discussed the Iraqi issue in detail. He said: I wish to reassure everyone at the official level in Iraq and outside Iraq that we have no ambitions in Iraq. That is not in our character anyway. So, if at any time it is said that we have a plan or a plot or that we are partners in anything of that sort against any Arab brother, we would only say "there is no power or strength saved in God," and only the truth prevails.

He added: There is no point in denying that there is an Iraqi problem or, mostly, an Iraqi issue. If we all agree on that then there must be a solution. As to what that solution should be, that is open to discussion at Iraqi and Arab levels. In today's world there is no problem that concerns one particular country without affecting others. Iraq, of course, has Arab and non-Arab neighbors who are affected by its problem in one way or another, and each has its own calculations and internal, regional, and international interests. The influential forces in this

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world also have their own calculations and interests. We in Jordan believe that we have a humanitarian, pan-Arab, and national duty toward Iraq, a duty which we must perform through advice, which we did, and through presentation of views and ideas and what we believe serves the interests of Iraq, all Iraq, which we are doing now.

He continued: "Federalism" has been mentioned. It is originally an Iraqi idea, not officially Iraqi but Iraqi. We, for our part, emphasize that it is not a Jordanian formula to be adhered to. The Iraqis, not us, have the choice. What concerns us is the preservation of Iraq's unity, territory, and people, maintaining the natural pluralism that exists in Iraq. We categorically reject the current partition and any kind of fragmentation.

The Jordanian foreign minister emphasized: We have no ready formula or plan. Anyone who makes such a claim would frankly be opening the way for us to doubt his intentions toward us or to say that he cannot understand our positions or our principles in our political attitude toward our brothers and friends in this world. We have heard such talk even here at home. Our answer is that the time will come when everyone will realize that our only aim has been the preservation of Iraq's unity and territorial integrity in accordance with our perception of events, interactions, and interests.

He added: It is no secret that we played a part in Resolution 986. Our purpose was to ease the Iraqi people's suffering, but we cannot deny that we were surprised by the way official Iraq reacted to that resolution. Frankly, we do not differentiate between one Iraqi and another. To us, all Iraqis are equal and any positive resolution must be good for all.

On the current state of inter-Arab relations, he said that it is exactly like a sick man who is recovering, with setbacks from time to time. We have repeatedly said in the past and are always saying that any setback in relations between two Arab states — and we do not say two Arab peoples (because there is no such thing anyway) — would be a move in the wrong direction which is bound to lead to evil, not to anything good.

Our relations with several Arab states suffered a serious setback, especially with the fraternal Gulf states, against the background of the crisis of the invasion of Kuwait. Now these relations are gradually returning to normal and to what they should be. Our relations with fraternal Saudi Arabia have been restored and we will have the honor of receiving Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal in Amman soon. Both sides made good efforts to restore relations to what they ought to be and the efforts were crowned with complete success, thank God. Our relations with Qatar are excellent and our relations with Oman are special and have not been affected. Our relations with Bahrain are excellent and have come a long way. Our relations with the United Arab Emirates [UAE] are good and steadily improving, and they will be much better in the near future. Our relations with Kuwait are also good. For our part we have done what we could and I have no doubt that our Kuwaiti brothers will soon meet us halfway, God willing. We appreciate their circumstances and at the same time see no good reason for the continuation of estrangement between us.

The Jordanian minister welcomed Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal's expected visit to Amman and praised the level of Jordanian-Saudi relations in particular, stressing that Saudi Arabia is a main pillar of Arab and Islamic joint action and that its importance and strategic role command the respect, appreciation, and pride of all.

He added: Our relations with Egypt are close and strategic, and we respect the special character of the brothers in that country, which is the big sister playing an essential role. They know this view of ours very well. Our relations with fraternal Syria are normal. For our part we see no good reason for estrangement. The brothers in Syria are close to us and they perhaps know best our views and intentions toward them or any other fraternal country, and they know very well that we never let down a brother and never will. We also appreciate their special character and their essential role just as we are aware of our own special character and essential role. We are not in competition with any Arab for any role. We honestly believe that our roles complement one another, rather than opposing one another.

He expressed Jordan's happiness with the major positive development on the Syrian-Israeli track. He said: We are confident that a comprehensive peaceful solution will become a reality after the completion of the final stage of negotiations with the Palestinians, and we hope that a just solution will be found for the issue of south Lebanon just like all the other tracks. Lebanon is dear to us. As regards the Palestinian brothers, our relations with them are relations of kinship and interlinked common interests. We are happy about the gradual implementation of the approved program for the expansion of self-rule powers to all the West Bank's cities. On King Husayn's instructions, Jordan wants to extend aid, to its utmost ability, to the Palestinian brothers. It does so without any hesitation. As regards future relations, they are subject to the will of the two peoples here and there, once the brothers get their full rights and have the self-determination they seek and once they establish their own state on their own territory, God willing. We will then have a just, balanced, and comprehensive peace.

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The foreign minister said: Jordanian-Iranian relations are normal and good and a dialogue is in progress with Iran, with everything proceeding normally as they have an embassy in Amman and we have an embassy in Tehran. We have appointed a new ambassador there. There is disagreement between us on the issue of peace. We respect their opinion and do not interfere in their affairs and do not accept any interference in our affairs by them or anyone else. We have achieved a solution to the question of the Iranian diplomat who, we are certain, played a role beyond the limit of his powers and rights as a diplomat. He has left Jordan after coordination with the Iranian ambassador in Amman. There is disagreement between us and them on the issue of the three islands disputed with the UAE. Our position is the same as that of the Damascus Declaration states. Perhaps it is that position of ours which has so far impeded a political dialogue between us and Iran, but we do not abandon our convictions for the sake of a political or nonpolitical gain.

On the possibility of holding an Iraqi opposition conference in Amman, the Jordanian foreign minister said: That question in that abstract form requires a yes or no answer, but I do not believe that the question should be asked in such a way as to be answered with a yes or no. To begin with, the question should be: Is Jordan prepared to host an Iraqi gathering of all parties of all trends, a gathering that is truly representative of Iraqi pluralism, to discuss general Iraqi affairs (of Iraq from one end to the other), a gathering of understanding, embracing all parties, for the sake of a single united Iraq, that would come up with a formula that would safeguard Iraq's unity and territorial integrity against any ambitions? Our answer would be yes, why not? We would not interfere in the affairs of whoever would attend such a meeting of understanding seeking to serve the interests of Iraq and its people, even if there were representatives of the current Iraqi official authorities. The point is that we want to help Iraq.

There are numerous forces in the Iraqi arena, each with its own calculations and concepts. We believe that the hope lies in the search for points of agreement among these trends to be channeled to serve Iraq and its future within the borders of Iraq allowing no window for anything from outside Iraq, a window which, if left open, would undoubtedly be disastrous for Iraq and its future.

Prime Minister on Iraq, Qatar, Israel, IAF

JN0201092296 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 2 Jan 95 p 1, 16

[FBIS Translated Text] Doha, QATARI NEWS AGENCY — His Excellency Prime Minister al-Sharif Zayd Bin-Shakir commended the great role being played by Qatari Amir Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani in the Arabian Gulf region and in the Arab and Islamic worlds as well. He added that his highness the amir has made a highly significant and meaningful impact to Qatar's credit.

In a statement to the Qatari newspaper AL-RAYAH to be published today, Tuesday, al-Sharif Zayd expressed the belief that what the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] is currently experiencing will not be aggravated. He affirmed that the GCC has the desire to cope with differences.

Jordan has urged the Iraqi Government to comply with all relevant UN resolutions, and to cooperate with world bodies in order to alleviate the sufferings of the Iraqi people, the prime minister noted. He indicated that Jordan is concerned about the future of Iraq and seeks to find a way out that would ensure the security of the Iraqi people.

The prime minister denied that Jordan has connected its Air Force to a joint alarm network with the Israeli Air Force.

Answering a question posed by the paper, the prime minister said that he does not intend to reshuffle his cabinet. He hinted at contacts the government is holding with the Islamic Action Front [IAF]. Nonetheless, he has not established a linkage between these contacts and a possible cabinet reshuffle.

Deputy Prime Minister on Iraqi Opposition

JN0101173996 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] 'Abd-al-Ra'uf al-Rawabidah, deputy prime minister and minister of education, has said that Jordan is Iraq's gateway and that it will continue to support the kinfolk there, stop at nothing to lift the embargo against them, and maintain our economic relationship.

In an interview with the London-based AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT newspaper, al-Rawabidah said: Regarding the Iraqi opposition, it is a fact on the ground. We do not interfere in the internal affairs of any Arab country, however, this does not mean that we do not show interest. We are part of nation with which we share good as well a bad times, therefore, we believe that this opposition's meeting on an Arab territory is better than their meeting on a territory of a certain party that might have objectives it might seek to attain through the opposition. Our position should not be mistaken for interference in the internal affairs. The Iraqi opposition

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meets with officials in many Arab countries. So, why the fuss if a meeting takes place in Jordan?

On Jordanian-Palestinian relations, al-Rawabidah said: We believe that talk about a federation, confederation, or a return to the previous formula should wait until after independence. Only then should it be discussed on an expanded level in order to arrive at an optimal formula to be presented to the two parties. In this case, this formula will be the result of a joint will; thus, no party will claim that it was treated unjustly, or that unity was imposed.

Iraqi Diplomat Reportedly Expelled From Jordan

JN0101133796 Amman AL-HADATH in Arabic 3 Jan 96 p 3

[Report by Khalid Abu-al-Khayr]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Official Iraqi sources told AL-HADATH that Jordanian authorities expelled Jasim Khalid Ahmad al-Khalidi, the assistant cultural attache at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, after accusing him of pursuing and threatening Iraqi opposition figures and Iraqi university professors and academicians working in Jordan.

AL-HADATH cites Iraqi opposition sources as saying that al-Khalidi took up his post in the Jordanian capital on 16 April 1992 and resided near the English School in Khalda, in Amman. The sources also said that al-Khalidi holds the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Iraqi intelligence service. His post as assistant cultural attache is a cover for his real mission — pursuing Iraqi opposition figures, university professors, and academicians working in Jordan.

The sources said that al-Khalidi, also known as Abu-Sumayyah, assassinated Iraqi diplomat Mu'ayyid 'Arab in Morocco in September 1990 after the latter gave up his post in protest against the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Al-Khalidi would take with him Dr. Fadil Muhsin al-Rubay'i, cultural attache at the Iraqi embassy, a university professor, and former secretary general of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education, on his visits to the houses of the Iraqi opposition figures, university professors, and academicians to legitimize these visits.

Arab diplomatic sources in Amman believe al-Khalidi was head of intelligence at the Iraqi embassy in Amman, and that Husayn Faraj Khalaf, who has been nominated as assistant to press adviser 'Adil Yasin Ibrahim, will replace him in this task. [passage omitted]

Plan To Host Iraqi Opposition Meeting Canceled

JN2912171495 Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD in Arabic 25 Dec 95 pp 1, 33

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman — AL-ITTIHAD — Sources close to General Husayn Kamil, former Iraqi minister of industry, who has been residing in Amman since his defection last August, say that he feels isolated and that the channels of contact between him and the Jordanian Government and palace are cut off. Meanwhile, the Iraqi opposition refuses to hold any contacts with him.

The same sources said that Husayn Kmail's relations with Jordan, the hosting country, are passing through a crisis, especially after his recent statements and rejection of the federation formula in Iraq as proposed by King Husayn. He believes that the Iraqi people, army, and rule cannot accept such a formula because it may increase the power of the forces supported by Iran and the Kurds who receive support from various international parties. The sources added that Kamil used to believe that the United States, which believes in the Jordanian role in the region, will support him in defining the mechanism and action programs to effect a change in the Iraqi leadership structure, however, he currently feels disappointed.

On the same level, informed Jordanian sources said that Jordan has called off its plan to hold an Iraqi opposition conference in Jordan. They say that this might be substituted by holding seminars in which papers are submitted under the slogan "Iraq's Future." In addition to the Iraqi opposition parties, independent politicians, academicians, and technocrats will be invited. The sources said that domestic, regional, and international circumstances have led to a change in the idea to convene the conference. Besides, it is now believed that it is impossible to effect the required change in Iraq.

Observers believe that Iraqi President Saddam Husayn's strict instructions to the Iraqi mass media not to harm Iraqi relations with the Gulf and Egypt, the handing of lists to the Iraqi Trade Ministry containing the names of Egyptian businessmen wishing to sell Egyptian products to Iraq, and Syria's attempt to reopen the land route between Damascus and Baghdad are viewed by Jordan as indications which should prompt a halt to Jordan's provocations against Baghdad.

In a separate development, AL-ITTIHAD learned that the Iraqi Government will conduct transfers in the Iraqi diplomatic corps and that Sa'd 'Abd-al-Majid al-Faysal is one of the strongest candidates for the post of ambassador in Amman.

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Official Reminds Husayn Kamil of 'Guest' Status

JN3012113995 Amman AL-MASHRIQ in Arabic 1-8 Jan 96 p 6

[Report by Muhammad al-Fayiz]

[FBIS Translated Text] Three countries bordering Iraq have criticized the idea of launching a confederation [as published] encompassing the three basic communities in Iraq. This is an implicit criticism of the Jordanian proposals aimed at ending the Iraqi people's plight.

At a meeting with Turkish and Iranian officials in Tehran last week, Salamah 'Allush, Syrian assistant foreign minister, said that Syria is opposed to any proposals to partition Iraq. He also condemned the plans to convene an Iraqi opposition conference in Amman.

Observers said that the meeting, to which Jordan was not invited although it is affected by and can affect the course of events in Iraq, reflected the apprehensions of the three countries regarding any possible change in Iraq. Ankara fears that the emergence of a federation encompassing the three basic communities in Iraq could give a boost to the Iraqi Kurds's quest for independence, which in turn could influence the yearning for independence in the hearts of Turkish Kurds, who number 12 million.

For its part, Iran is opposed to any change in the traditional political structure in Iraq. Nonetheless, it would welcome a greater share in political power for Shiites. It is afraid that the Jordanians' Hashemite Sunni role could increase the leverage of Iraqi Sunnis.

Amman appears to be uninterested in the Tehran meeting, particularly since the official media have not reported the meeting despite the intensive contacts held by Jordanian officials headed by Tariq 'Ala'-al-Din and 'Abd-al-Ilah al-Kurdi, experts in Iraqi affairs and senior officials of the General Intelligence Department, in London last month. These contacts involved meetings with all Shiite and Sunni opposition leaders; namely, Muhammad Bahr-al-'Ulum, Dr. Layth Kubbah, Shaykh Sami 'Azari al-Ma'jun, 'Ali 'Ilawi, Hani al-Fakiki, Sa'd Salih Jabr, Nabil al-Janabi, and others.

Jordanian sources said: Amman's overriding concern remains to attempt to bring the various Iraqi political forces together, and to bring them to agree on common denominators that would enable them to influence the course of events in Iraq, avert chaos and a bloodbath, and a frenzy of ethnic or sectarian liquidations, which might appear on the scene. Jordan would be at the forefront of the countries that could be affected by such developments, particularly since there are over 250,000 Iraqi fugitives in Jordan, who have fled the Saddam regime's repressive practices.

Nabil al-Janabi, an Iraqi opposition figure close to Jordan, has stated that King Husayn has not proposed a specific preference for a future Iraq, and has never championed the partitioning of Iraq, as some capitals are claiming. He has always wanted Iraqis to produce a solution to their country's ordeal. He quoted King Husayn as saying that he would be among them to help them cope with difficulties, and not to be their king.

A high-level Jordanian official said: Jordan has not adopted a single option to the exclusion of others. It has not insisted that defecting General Husayn Kamil attend any talks with the opposition.

With regard to the reports that Husayn Kamil rejects the moves being made on Iraq's future, and that he charges Jordan with adopting a federation proposal, which to him means the partitioning of Iraq, the Jordanian official said: This is untrue. The Jordanian moves in this regard are aimed at safeguarding the higher interests, particularly Jordan's pan-Arab security. Jordan might be the only party that does not covet Iraqi territory. Consequently, Husayn Kamil must not forget that he is a guest in Jordan.

King Husayn has reacted to charges that Jordan aims to partition Iraq by saying: At this point, partitioning is a de facto reality. Parts of Iraqi territory, specifically in the north and south of the country, were excluded from the referendum recently held in Iraq, because Iraq, practically speaking, is a divided country.

In the interview he granted to the London-based AL-WASAT magazine, King Husayn added: Federation might be one of the ways to effect the required change. It is merely one proposal among many others that are being raised.

Official Confirms Halt in Telephone Links With Iraq

JN0201100596 Amman PETRA-JNA in Arabic 1525 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, 30 Dec (PETRA) — Engineer Walid al-Duwayk, director general of the Telecommunications Cooperation, said that the reasons for the halt in telephone links with Iraq are not related to the Jordanian telephone network.

Commenting on questions by citizens on the failure of telephone links with Iraq, he said these links were stopped, or were partially or fully cut off more than two weeks ago. This has affected both direct telephone links or links through international exchange operators.

In a statement to the JORDANIAN NEWS AGENCY, al-Duwayk said the reasons for this halt are not related

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to the Jordanian telephone network and are not within the powers of the Telecommunications Cooperation.

He added that while the corporation apologizes to the citizens for this, it urges them not to try to make telephone contacts in such a situation. He also said that the corporation will inform the citizens when the telephone links between Jordan and Iraq return to normal after the reasons that led to the halt are eliminated.

Shubaylat Aide Held on Charges of Slandering King

JN0101125196 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 1 Jan 96 p 12

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman (J.T.) — Imad Ghanim, director of the office of Layth Shubaylat, has been held on Sunday [31 December] on charges of slandering Their Majesties King Husayn and Queen Nur, according to a member of the defence team of Mr. Shubaylat.

Mr. Ghanim has been ordered held without bail, the lawyer said.

Mr. Shubaylat was held 9 December on four charges that included, in addition to slandering Their Majesties, undermining the country's financial status and inciting sectarian and ethnic troubles.

Mr. Ghanim's detention could not be confirmed by official sources.

Sources: Central Bank Requests Acceptance of Shekels

JN0201091296 Amman AL-bILAD in Arabic 3 Jan 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] The Central Bank of Jordan issued a circular to Jordanian banks last week asking them to accept transactions with the Israeli currency, the shekel, and to consider it an acceptable currency for dealing in the Jordanian market.

Sources of the Central Bank of Jordan said the Israeli Central Bank is expected to issue a similar circular this week on accepting the Jordanian currency, the dinar, by Israeli banks.

This step comes after the Palestinian Monetary Authority took over responsibilities of supervising commercial banks in the West Bank.

Central Bank Source Denies Request

JN0201100196 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 2 Jan 96 p 10

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, AL-RA'Y — An official source of the Central Bank of Jordan denied that a circular was issued to Jordanian Banks and financial and currency exchange companies banning dealing with the Israeli shekel in the Jordanian market, and said the bank does not issue instructions on dealing with the currency of any country in the Jordanian market.

In a statement to AL-RA'Y, the source added the Central Bank issued a circular to the concerned quarters on 4 December based on the memorandum of the minister of justice on ending the law on boycott and dealing with the enemy. In that circular, the bank asked the banks and financial and currency exchange companies to deal with the State of Israel, its currency, and citizens as any other foreign country.

The source added that the Central Bank usually issues instructions dealing with the cancellation of the currency of a certain country or the issuance of a new denomination and its specifications. The source stressed that the Central Bank does not force any quarter to deal with the currency of a certain country, and the only obligatory thing is to deal with the Jordanian dinar.

Meanwhile, a number of money changers said no transactions in the Israeli shekel have taken place in the Jordanian market although it is treated as any other foreign currency. The money changers said the shekel at the local exchange market is currently bought at 215 fils, and is sold at 220 fils.

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Al-Hirawi on Lebanese Army's Role in South

NC2912140295 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1130 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] President of the Republic Ilyas al-Hirawi has asserted that once peace is achieved no army but the Lebanese Army will be in the south. This is the slogan we believe in. It will be completed when we gain independence and when Lebanon recovers, he said, adding that the State is preparing its army for this purpose.

Al-Hirawi said: Let every Lebanese rest assured, wherever he is, that Lebanon has become a safehaven in which we take pride before our visitors, Arabs and foreigners alike. The president was speaking at a meeting with Republican Palace correspondents and photographers to mark the new year. [passage omitted]

Israeli Shelling, 'Resistance' Operations Reported

Concurrent Attacks Take Place

NC3112185195 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1630 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The artillery of the Israeli occupation forces in al-Zaffatah and 'Ali al-Tahir shelled the deserted Lebanese Army barracks using 155mm and 120mm rounds at 0730 today. The shelling was soon expanded to include al-Nabatiyah al-Fawqa; the suburbs of al-'Aqidah, al-Misha', and al-Maslakh; the surroundings of Qasr Ghandur and al-Mustaqbal schools; and the periphery of Habbush and al-Jabal al-Rafi' in Iqlim al-Tuffah. The artillery shelling was accompanied by 12.7mm machine-gun fire directed at the forests around the occupation posts in 'Ali al-Tahir, al-Dabshah, and al-Suwayda'.

At 0830, Israeli helicopters extensively raked the surroundings of the deserted Army barracks in al-Nabatiyah, the outer parts of al-Nabatiyah al-Fawqa, and the 'Ali al-Tahir forests. The helicopters then fired a rocket at the deserted barracks.

The acts of aggression, which continued until 1000, caused tension and caution in al-Nabatiyah, with frightened citizens staying home for fear the shelling might expand.

In a statement, the Amal Movement said that at 0725 its groups launched concurrent attacks on a series of occupation posts in 'Ali al-Tahir, al-Burj, Qal'at al-Shaqif, and al-Dabshah. The martyr 'Abbas Hammud group attacked the Israeli post in 'Ali al-Tahir using machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. After a 30-minute clash, the post came under the control of the mujahidin's fire. A Merkava tank was destroyed and direct hits were scored. The statement added: At the same time, martyr Muhammad al-'Abd's group launched a missile attack against the occupation forces' posts in Qal'at al-Shaqif and managed to score direct hits. Meanwhile, the martyr Muhammad Za'rur group attacked the occupation post in al-Burj, placing it under its fire control and scoring direct hits; flames were seen rising over the post's fortifications. The martyr Muhammad Rida 'Abd-al-Nabi group attacked the occupation post in al- Dabshah, destroying a tank and setting the post on fire.

The statement said Amal groups returned fire to the sources that shelled Lebanese villages. The fire support groups shelled the posts of 'Ali al-Tahir and al-Dabshah at 0930, scoring direct hits. This was in retaliation for the Israeli shelling of al-Nabatiyah villages. The statement said the enemy used its helicopters in the fighting; they raked the deserted Army barracks and occupation artillery directed heavy fire against liberated villages in al- Nabatiyah.

For its part, the Islamic Resistance issued a statement today in which it said that the fire support unit shelled the enemy post in Sujud at 0840, scoring direct hits.

[In a related report, Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic at 1715 GMT adds: "Hizballah said in a statement that the Islamic Resistance attacked an Israeli unit in the Taw'amat Niha post at 1615 today. It added that the Resistance shelled the post using the appropriate weapons and scoring accurate hits."]

Our correspondent in Western al-Biqa' reported that the Jabal al-Dahr hills came under Israeli mortar shelling originating from the Zummarayya post. A tank for agent Lahd [South Lebanese Army] directed salvos of fire toward the Mimis sector and the area around the 'Ayn Fajr farm. The shelling continued until 0930.

According to information from the occupied border strip this afternoon, citizen Muhammad Husayn Khalil Qutaysh was martyred from torture in the al-Khiyam prison. Sources said that the 60-year-old martyr was arrested four days ago by Kamal Shuraym, the agent militia's official in Hula. The martyr is a father of nine children.

Israeli Overflights Reported

NC0101075296 Ba'labakk Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic 0630 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] With regard to the situation in the south, the enemy's artillery resumed its attacks this morning. Sujud, Jabal al-Rafi', and the al-Litani River basin were reported to have come under 155-mm Zionist shelling. Hassan Haydar has the details:

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[Begin Haydar recording] The Zionist enemy forces resumed their aggressions against the liberated areas in the south, namely Iqlim al-Tuffah and al-Nabatiyah.

Since the early hours of dawn today, the enemy artillery emplacements in al-Zaffatah, al-Rayhan, and Duhur al-'Ayshiyah have been directing intermittent artillery fire against the Sujud hills, Jabal al-Rafi', the Lebanese army's derelict barracks in al-Nabatiyah, Arnun, Yuhmur, Mazra'at al-Hamra', and the al-Litani River basin.

At around midnight, the enemy's artillery bombarded the woods around the town of Habbush and the Nab' al-Tasah basin with several shells. This was accompanied by machine-gun and rocket fire against the 'Ali al-Tahir woods, the army's derelict barracks, and Hayy al-Maslakh in al-Nabatiyah amid flights by enemy helicopters which continued until morning. [end recording]

Officials Comment

NC0101133496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1130 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Israeli occupation forces stationed in Blat fired 10 155-mm shells at the liberated areas in the south this morning. [passage omitted]

Security sources reported the first attack by the resistance on an occupation forces post inside the occupied border area near Shab'a at approximately 0415 today.

The Israeli occupation artillery emplacements in al-Zaffatah and Qal'at al-Shaqif bombarded the outskirts of Zawtar al-Sharqiyah and Zawtar al-Gharbiyah, the al-Litani River basin, and Mazra'at al-Hamra' at 1130 today.

The Islamic Resistance announced that its units attacked the occupation forces positions in al-'Izziyah and Qal'at al-Shaqif with rockets and machine guns scoring direct hits against both posts. [passage omitted]

Israeli warplanes have been conducting medium-level flights over al-Nabatiyah and Iqlim al-Tuffah since 1115.

In response to the enemy Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq's statements, AFP cites a number of senior Hizballah officials stating the party's determination to shell northern Israel if the Israeli army targets civilians in south Lebanon again.

Deputy Muhammad Funaysh has stressed that it is the katyusha rockets that deter the enemy from attacking innocent people and peaceful villages. He added that neither UN resolutions nor negotiations can halt the enemy's aggression and that the weapons of the resistance alone can act as a deterrent.

Shaykh Hashim Safyy-al-Din, member of the Hizballah Shura Council, said resistance will continue no matter what the sacrifices as long as a single inch of land is occupied. He added: We should not stand hands-tied in the face of the world's silence and the killing of people and destruction of their homes. We should pay back aggression twofold.

More Shelling, Overflights Reported

NC0201095196 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0915 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Several shells originating from the Israeli forces posts in Rshaf landed on the suburbs of the town of Sribbin before noon today.

At dawn today, the Israeli forces in Mashru' al-Tibi and Tallusah bombarded areas around Qabrikha, Majdal Silm, and Tulin and machine gunned nearby valleys.

The Israeli forces also machine-gunned the Nafkhah, (Maryamin), and al-Sulaymi valleys while Israeli helicopters flew over the south.

Gunboats Fire at Shore

NC0201104096 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1000 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli occupation forces resumed their attacks on southern areas this morning. Israeli heavy artillery bombarded the suburbs of Habbush, al-Wadi al-Akhdar, al-Nabatiyah, and Iqlim al-Tuffah, causing material damage to crops and property.

Earlier, enemy shelling targeted the outskirts of the towns of Qabrikha, Majdal Silm, and Tulin. Israeli artillery also fired at areas around its posts in al-Tibi and nearby valleys, as well as at the Abu Qamhah plain, and (Maryamin), while helicopters flew over the area.

With regard to the continuing Israeli sea blockade of the southern coast, gunboats have randomly machine-gunned the shore.

Hizballah Attacks Reported

NC0201065196 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0415 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli forces bombarded the Jabbur and Abu Rashid hills and the vicinity of al-Surayrah hills in Western al-Biqa' yesterday.

The Israeli forces stationed on the Arnun Road are still maintaining a roadblock and preventing citizens from leaving the town of Yuhmur.

Hizballah has claimed an attack on the Israeli post of al-'Izziyah and claimed responsibility for detonating

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an explosive charge under two Lahd forces [South Lebanese Army, SLA] foot patrols near the Taw'mat Niha post. It also claimed the shelling of Qal'at al-Shaqif post.

[In a related report, Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic at 0530 GMT on 2 January adds: "The occupation forces carried out attacks on the central and western sectors, Iqlim al-Tuffah, and western al-Biqa' in the last 24 hours.

["Security sources report military movements in the Rabb al-Thalathin area inside the occupied border strip. Enemy helicopters strafed the outskirts of Yatar and Kafra while enemy artillery bombarded Zawtar al-Sharqiyah, Zawtar al-Gharbiyah, the outskirts of Yuhmur, and areas around the towns of Tulin, Qabrikha, Arnun, Habbush, the army's deserted barracks in al-Nabatiyah, al-Nabatiyah al-Fawqa, Jabal al-Rafi', the Habbush River basin, and Mazra'at al- Hamra'.

["The occupation forces set up a roadblock on the Arnun-Yuhmur Road, prevented people from leaving Yuhmur, and searched those entering the town. Enemy artillery bombarded the Jabbur and Abu Rashid hills in the western al-Biqa'.

["Resistance men retaliated for these acts of aggression by attacking enemy positions and patrols in various parts of the occupied strip. The resistance men attacked enemy posts in al-'Izziyah and Qal'at al-Shaqif. Claiming responsibility for these operations, the Islamic Resistance said it had scored direct hits. The resistance men detonated an explosive charge under an Israeli vehicle on the Jazzin Road, killing and wounding its crew. The agent Lahd militia radio acknowledged the attack."]

Lebanese Shiite Leader on Jordan, U.S. Policy

NC2712205795 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1730 GMT 27 Dec 95

[Interview with Shiite leader Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah by 'Isam Hasan; place and date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Hasan] Your Eminence Fadlallah, there seems to be a plan intended for Iraq named "the Jordanian Plan." It seeks to set up a confederation among Jordan, Iraq, and the Oslo authorities [reference to the Palestinian Authority]. What information do you have about this plan and how do you view it?

[Fadlallah] I have no detailed, specific information but my analysis of the plan is that it represents a political move made on borrowed time to preoccupy the Iraqi and Arab arenas with controversial ideas and plans. The aim is to distract both opponents and loyal people in Iraq and the Arabs from their sensitivities toward Jordan and its relationship with Israel.

I believe that the current stage is linked with the U.S. efforts to disperse Iraqi political action into various phases. The objective is to distract the Iraqis from sound planning of a solution by mobilizing, strengthening, and uniting the domestic situation and finalizing proposals to topple the tyrant regime.

The main idea is that any controversial plans and programs and any meetings to decide the type of angles and discussion of this or that comma or word would distract Iraq from analyzing the U.S. plan. The U.S. plan seeks to deprive the Iraqis inside and outside Iraq of any power and create abstract controversy over fictitious and imaginary plans. The U.S. aim is to dominate Iraq in terms of its oil as well as economically, politically, and militarily.

Therefore, what is required is that a strong Iraq that may be able to stand firmly against Israel and U.S. interests should not exist. What is required is an Iraq that glorifies the United States. We notice this in the majority of the opposition's inclination toward the United States on the pretext that the United states is the world's leading mighty power and thus there will be no solution unless it is based on a U.S. solution. We tell these people that the United states wants a U.S. solution covering all its interests in Iraq and the region. There will be no Iraqi, pan-Arab, or Islamic solution through what the United States is planning. What is required is a U.S. Iraq subject to a regional security order in which the United States wants Israel to be the strongest element running the U.S. interests in the region as well Israel's interests.

We believe that Iraq lacks objective circumstances for federalism or confederalism because the nature of the Iraqi people with their diverse ethnic and sectarian groups does not allow the existence of federalism isolating this party from that party. Iraq has no objective capabilities to be linked with any kind of confederalism with Jordan, the Oslo Accord group, and Zionism.

The U.S. policy in various regions, as we are experiencing in Lebanon, aims to waste time. It seeks nothing but to occupy others with some useless fun.

Hizballah's Qasim on Syria-Iran 'Misunderstanding'

NC0101215396 London MBC Television in Arabic 2100 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah Deputy Secretary General Shaykh Na'im Qasim told MBC Television today that Hizballah will continue bombarding Israel as long as it continues its attacks on Lebanon. He

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stressed that resistance operations will continue until south Lebanon is liberated.

[Begin recording] [MBC correspondent Radwan Sammak] This escalation of tension comes in the wake of Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq's threat to carry out reprisals against Lebanon in retaliation for the resistance operations in the south. What point will the escalation in south Lebanon reach? When we put this question to Hizballah Deputy Secretary General Shaykh Na'im Qasim, he said:

[Qasim] When our civilians are subjected to danger, the rockets must fall on northern Palestine as a response to the Israeli assaults on civilians. Hence we regard what is happening in south Lebanon as a continuous Israeli assault. The operations carried out by the Islamic Resistance are part of a natural right to defend the territory and the people.

[Sammak] What will your position be if one of the conditions set by a likely Syrian-Israeli agreement is to halt the resistance operations against Israel?

[Qasim] This matter has not yet been raised. Nevertheless, we state that we will continue our resistance to liberate the occupied territory. We must press ahead with our march until the entire occupied area is liberated.

[Sammak] The recent round of Syrian-Israeli negotiations has caused a breach to appear in the Syrian-Iranian relationship. What is Hizballah's position on this development?

[Qasim] First of all, I do not believe that the recent misunderstanding between Iran and Syria is directly linked to the negotiations but it does have a connection with a paragraph that appeared in the recent statement issued by the Damascus Declaration countries about the issue of the disputed United Arab Emirates islands. Secondly, I think that the two countries must seek to clear up the misunderstanding with appropriate measures. Concerning where we stand on the matter, I believe that it is not appropriate to link recent events with any deterioration or improvement of relations. It is useful to emphasize the need for strategic relations between Syria and Iran and between Syria and Hizballah because there are major issues that need to be tackled in our region. [end recording]

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Al-Ahmar Stresses 'Seriousness' To Achieve Peace

JN3012183295 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1615 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Tartus—The council of the Tartus branch of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party held its annual meeting this morning. The meeting was attended by comrades 'Abdallah al-Ahmar, assistant secretary general of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party; Dr. Ahmad Dirgham, member of the Ba'th Party's Regional Command and head of the Regional Party Preparation and Popular Organizations Bureaus; 'Abdallah Abu-al-Rish, head of the Party Committee for Control and Inspection; Muhammad Iskandar, secretary of the Tartus Ba'th Party Branch; Ghazi Khadrah, Tartus governor; the comrade members of the branch command; and heads of the popular organizations in the governorate. [passage omitted]

Speaking at the meeting, the Ba'th Party assistant secretary general conveyed the greetings of struggler comrade Hafiz al-Asad, secretary general of the party and president of the republic, to the comrade attendees and the masses of the Tartus Governorate, wishing them success and progress in their work. He stressed that the leader and the leadership are following with interest the work of the party and its institutions and all its members to achieve the tasks specified by the annual plans. [passage omitted]

The comrade assistant secretary general reviewed the recent Arab and international political developments. He touched on the latest developments in the peace process. He stressed Syria's seriousness and desire to achieve a just, comprehensive peace based on the resolutions of international legitimacy and leading to the liberation of the territory and the restoration of rights.

Comrade al-Ahmar said that Syria, while considering peace its strategic option, will not relinquish or cede an inch of territory or any of its rights. He said that Syria will continue efforts to help the peace process attain the objectives it was set to achieve according to the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 425, as well as the land-for-peace principle, leading to Israel's full withdrawal from the Golan to the 4 June 1967 lines and from southern Lebanon through equitable [mutakafi'ah] and equal [mutasawiyah] security arrangements.

Comrade al-Ahmar reviewed the most important Arab issues. He stressed the importance of Arab solidarity. He touched on the events and developments in the world, including the wars, disputes, and changes and their effects and repercussions on international security and stability. [passage omitted]

Paper Commends Peres Stand, Hopes for Peace

JN0201071796 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0545 GMT 2 Jan 96

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] The newspaper TISHRIN comments on the Maryland peace talks, saying: The new element in these talks is that each side has presented its views in all clarity and seriousness, and that the ongoing informal consultations with the U.S. peace team have focused on specific issues that will be debated in the second round of talks due to convene tomorrow. The Syrian- Israeli talks have given rise to great hopes that peace is possible to achieve in 1996 if there is good faith and persistent efforts.

The paper adds: As is well known, Syria, which is faithful to its cause, is serious in its efforts to achieve peace. Throughout the past four years, it has shown that it is firmly committed to the cause of peace. For had it not been for Syria, the Madrid conference would not have convened in the first place. Similarly, had it not been for Syria, the U.S. initiative would have been knocked down by Israeli intransigence.

The paper goes on to say: The former Israeli Government launched a campaign of fabrications against Syria to wriggle out of the peace process, whereas the current Israeli Government has pronounced that comprehensive peace in the region is impossible to achieve without Syria, and that peace with Syria will lead to peace with Lebanon and all other Arabs.

The paper notes the Israeli prime minister's remarks that he is satisfied with the progress of the talks in Maryland, and that Syria is interested in achieving an honorable peace.

TISHRIN says: Syria strongly believes that peace is possible to achieve if Israel meets its requirements, which are enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the U.S. initiative, chief among which is the exchange of territory for peace.

The paper adds: Israel is required to unequivocally and unambiguously pledge complete and rapid withdrawal from the Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders. Israeli withdrawal is the key to a true, honorable, and comprehensive peace in the region. If such withdrawal is effected, it will be possible to achieve satisfactory solutions to all other problems provided that there is good faith and that Syrian sovereignty over its territory and resources remains intact.

TISHRIN concludes by saying: The end of 1995 saw the activation of the peace process on the Syrian track.

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Hence, the year 1996 must be the year of peace on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Paper Says Nation 'Sincerely Working' for Peace

JN0101070396 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0550 GMT 1 Jan 96

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] Under the headline "Syria's Year," TISHRIN says: As a new year begins, Syria is getting stronger and more energetic under the leadership of President Hafiz al-Asad. Syria now adheres, more than ever before, to the principles of pan-Arab action and the requirements for a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The newspaper adds: Many people thought that Syria's firm position on the need for full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, southern Lebanon, and the rest of the occupied territories put Syria in a difficult situation on the international level. What happened before the end of the year, however, is that Syria became the focus of attention. The whole world recognized that there can be no peace in the region without Syria and that its participation is essential. In fact, Israel itself recognized Syria's central role. Israel, therefore, told the United States that it wants to resume peace talks with Syria.

TISHRIN asserts that this Syrian stance not only reflects national interest, but also reflects the higher interests of the Arab nation. Syria, under the leadership of President al-Asad, is the heart and soul of the nation. All eyes are focused on it, and all strugglers look up to it to seek guidance by its pioneering political approach. This is because Syria is committed to the people's critical issues and because leader al-Asad embodies the people's wishes and aspirations. Over the past 25 years in the march of the glorious Corrective Movement, President al-Asad has been a symbol of national struggle and of the nation's resolve to regain its land and rights.

TISHRIN adds: Last year was mainly characterized by Syria's pioneering role and leader al-Asad's struggling stands, which qualified him to be the man of the year. The year 1996 will also be Syria's year if what it wants — a just and comprehensive peace — is achieved. Syria is sincerely working for peace, but it will never accept a settlement that keeps any trace of the occupation or relinquishes any right. Peace, as Syria and leader al-Asad view it, is the establishment of justice and ending occupation, injustice, and oppression.

Addressing our steadfast people in the occupied Golan, TISHRIN says: As a new year begins, the night of occupation must end and the dawn must break so our people in the Golan can regain their freedom and return to the motherland as one unified family behind the leadership of struggler President Hafiz al-Asad, the hope of the nation in liberation and victory.

Radio: 'Substance' of Peace Consists of Land

JN0101155996 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1237 GMT 1 Jan 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gentlemen: Today we pause at the first page of the new year, after the last leaf of last year—with its good and evil events, as well as its joys and sad, tragic catastrophes—was turned over yesterday.

However, the first page of the new year does not mean an interruption of time, because time does not stop. Any day only ends at the first moment of the following day. Any new day inherits many legacies from the previous day.

We in Syria have waved goodbye to a year in which great hopes and aspirations were fulfilled. However, we have still wider hopes and aspirations, enhanced by the unshakable certainty that they will become reality as long as we rally around an unparalleled leadership. Time will not grant us a similar leadership in tens of decades.

No doubt, anyone who knew Syria before the Corrective Movement and who sees Syria today would realize that our hopes are legitimate and that our aspirations realistic. He could also assess the level Syria will reach, as well as the highest level of dignity which President Hafiz al-Asad has achieved for Syria.

The Syrian achievements realized in 25 years under the Corrective Movement despite Syria's circumstances and the challenges facing it are considered miracles by all standards. Only those who have the will, resolve, and courage similar to that of Hafiz al-Asad could achieve such miracles.

It is clear that engagement in peace was the result of al-Asad's will, resolve, and great courage. Engagement in peace is also a human sense of peace as a great and sublime value, as well as proof of the deep belief in the role of peace in enabling the peoples to invest their energies, consolidate their resources, and employ their capabilities for construction, development, and work in order to achieve good for themselves, for the coming generations, and for all of entire mankind.

Syria's insistence on rejecting peace not established on the solid ground of justice is conclusive evidence confirming Syria's interest in a cohesive, solid, and viable peace which has the components for survival.

No doubt, the pillars of peace Syria is looking forward to are not unknown. No one can argue about the soundness

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of these pillars or cast doubt on the inevitability of adopting them if peace is to avoid collapse. It is clear that Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 425 illustrate these pillars. The U.S. initiative, which calls for exchanging land for peace, has also demonstrated and illustrated these pillars.

It goes without saying that it is impossible for peace to coexist with aggression or with any of its vestiges. Thus, if peace is to be established, a healthy atmosphere should first and foremost be provided, so peace can survive and enjoy well-being.

Such a healthy atmosphere can only be provided through rights and justice. Both rights and justice dictate the need for an Israeli withdrawal from every inch occupied in the aggression on Syria in 1967, and on Lebanon in 1978. President al-Asad expressed this fact by saying: If peace is to be established, its basic substance will be land.

As the new year begins today, we hope that the peace march—which emerged from hibernation in the last few days of last year—will proceed in the right direction on a sound and straight path devoid of obstacles, mines, and all that could return the peace process to the perils of dormancy.

Radio: Damascus 'Determined To Work More' for Peace

JN3112162295 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2145 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Today we stand at the threshold of a new year, bidding farewell to a year that was full of events and changes which turned many facts upside down and gave rise to new challenges and hopes that light a candle for the new year. We welcome the new year amid changes whose beginning we have witnessed. Now we look to the future with many national and pan-Arab aspirations and ambitions whose banner Syria has carried in a bid to achieve the nation's goals of liberation, restoration of usurped rights, and guaranteed security and honor.

Syria begins the new year armed with the necessary components for internal development, which have been growing year by year, making Syria became the symbol of national unity and political stability, and a unique model that stands as a living example to others. The advancement and comprehensive development enjoyed by Syria are based on national and pan-Arab principles, thanks to the originality of our Arab nation and its values, and to a wise leadership represented by leader al-Asad—a leadership which has expressed the Arab people's will and ambitions, and embodied their values and firm principles, remaining strong, proud, and impregnable in the face of all the changes that have stormed the world, proving that it is genuine and capable of enduring and renewing.

Today Syria's image is clear to all as it begins a new year with firm positions and future outlook, fighting the battle of peace which began at the Madrid conference, demonstrating ability, confidence in itself, its people, and in its ability to realize its aspired goal of achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on international legitimacy and an unwavering faith in the restoral of all its rights without relinquishing so much as one iota of its territory.

These are Syria's values and firm principles which have not and will never change. They have become a slogan and example to all observers and political circles in various capitals. By adopting this course, Syria has proved its eagerness to work in harmony with the international community in seeking a just and comprehensive peace based on Israel's withdrawal from all of the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 lines, and from all of southern Lebanon in implementation of international Resolution 425, thus establishing Middle East peace on the basis of justice ['adalah], equitability [takafu'], and balance [tawazun].

As it welcomes the new year, Syria is still determined to work more to foster internal development and bring about a just and comprehensive peace that ensures security and reassurance for all the peoples of the region and guarantees their honor and rights.

Press on Wye Talks, 'Difficult Decisions' Needed

JN3112102695 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0550 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] AL-BA'TH comments on the Syrian-Israeli peace talks, scheduled to resume on Wednesday [3 January]. AL-BA'TH says: Despite the optimistic atmosphere of the new talks on peace, which we, as well as other peace-loving people, hope will become a reality, we believe that these talks are exploratory. The results of these talks will define the direction of the peace process.

AL-BA'TH notes that a just and comprehensive peace has its own terms and requirements. When there is clear and precise commitment to these terms and requirements the peace process will certainly move in the right direction. The paper says that the current talks are considered an opportunity, as reaffirmed by many officials in the world, to achieve real peace. This

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opportunity must not be wasted. We hope that this opportunity will achieve the peace that is sought by us all, will end the continuous tension in our region, and that will provide security, stability, and peace for everybody. AL-BA'TH says: Since the beginning of the Madrid conference, even long before that, we in Syria have been calling for achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region which will restore rights to their owners.

Concluding its commentary, AL-BA'TH says: The current peace talks are a valuable opportunity which the Israeli side should deal with in a serious and positive way if it is really interested in seeing the region enjoy security, stability, and peace.

Commenting on the same topic, TISHRIN says: Following two intensive rounds of talks, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is scheduled to visit the region to narrow the existing gaps. The paper notes that the Israelis have not defined their stand on two basic issues, which are, full withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 borders, and even [muta'adil] and equitable [mutakafi'] security arrangements, which do not encroach on sovereignty. TISHRIN says: If a full Israeli withdrawal paves the way for a firm, just, and comprehensive peace, equitable security arrangements consolidate peace and stability. Hence, Israel's commitment to these two issues will open the door wide open for the sought peace.

TISHRIN notes that Syria has always expressed its readiness for full peace in return for complete withdrawal, and welcomed every positive initiative made by Israel. This is because peace is Syria's strategic option and because it looks forward to a stable region free of disputes and mass destruction weapons.

TISHRIN says: It is natural for the Syrian interlocutors to present, right from the beginning, the issue of Israeli withdrawal and to concentrate their efforts on this issue. This is because this is the most important issue since it deals with restoring part of the homeland. Inasmuch as Israel voices support for peace and quickly announces its commitment to a full and comprehensive peace, so it will lay the solid ground for a firm peace in the region. The Israelis know full well that peace with Syria will lead to peace with Lebanon, and peace eventually means security and stability.

Concluding its commentary, TISHRIN says: The Maryland talks have so far been characterized by seriousness, but seriousness alone is not sufficient. Seriousness should be translated into decisions termed by the Israelis as difficult decisions. In fact, such decisions are not difficult, because they will yield great results, the most important being a state of peace, security, and stability sought by the regional countries and the world.

AL-THAWRAH says in its commentary that the world is still looking at the Maryland talks and their second round, scheduled to resume on Wednesday. The world is awaiting the results of these talks, which will be decisive in terms of deciding the future of peace in the region and the peace process on the Syrian track. AL-THAWRAH adds: Some Israeli officials and world capitals are coming out with optimistic statements. Political observers are predicting the possibility of the talks resulting in agreement on many complicated issues, which have always been considered essential and delicate issues, and which Syria has considered red lines and constants based on the resolutions of international legitimacy, and which do not tolerate bargaining or relinquishment, particularly with regard to withdrawal and the return of the all the Golan and southern Lebanon. Despite all this, caution remains the master of the situation, particularly since the period which followed the Madrid conference — with all the entailed intransigence, obstructive maneuvering, and attempts to evade the peace requirements — has entrenched negative convictions. Removing the effects of these convictions, needs much time and tangible, practical steps on the ground in order to underscore the soundness of the new talks about peace and the importance of achieving it with Syria, because it will then become a peace with all Arabs.

Concluding its commentary, AL-THAWRAH reiterates the need to exploit the available historic opportunity and employ it in the service of peace. This can only be done through Israel's compliance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Security Council and accepting the land-for-peace principle.

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Afghanistan

Hostilities Reportedly End Between Government, Dostam

Iran Urges Talks

BK3012110195 Hong Kong AFP in English 1046 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, Dec 30 (AFP) — Iran has urged Afghan Uzbek leader General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam to promote a settlment to the Afghan civil war through talks with President Borhanoddin Rabbani, Dostam's spokesman said Saturday.

Dostam told Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Alaedin Bourjerdi in northern Afghanistan Friday that he was not against negotiations "involving" all Afghan groups including the Taleban, said the spokesman, Sebghatollah Zaki.

Bourjerdi, considered a key player in Teheran's diplomatic efforts to promote a peace process in the war-torn neighbouring country, had a two-hour meeting with Dostam in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Zaki said Dostam will personally attend a meeting of the four- party Afghan opposition coalition due in Mazar-i-Sharif Tuesday to decide a response to Rabbani's offer for talks with rivals.

Dostam's National Islamic Movement is part of the coalition, called the Supreme Coordination Council of the Islamic Revolution in Afghanistan (SCCIRA).

Other members of the alliance are former Afghan premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami, former president Sebghatollah Mojaddedi's Jabbah Nijat-e-Milli and the Shia Hezb-e Wahdat faction.

Bourjerdi, a frequent visitor to Kabul, told Dostam that Rabbani was willing to withdraw a fatwa (ruling by clerics) in 1994 which dubbed the Uzbek leader a non-Moslem and called for a jehad (holy war) against him, Zaki said.

Rabbani Thursday announced through his spokesman in Kabul that he was ready to travel to rivals' strongholds for talks on resolving the civil war.

The offer was interpreted as an unprecedented sign of flexibility on the part of the bleaguered Kabul government, but in their first reaction Friday a spokesman for the Taleban in Pakistan termed it a "ruse."

The Taleban spokesman, Mufti Mohammad Masoom Afghani, demanded that Rabbani should resign if he was sincere in seeking a negotiated peace.

The Taleban milita, which sprang up from Koranic schools in Pakistan and southern Afghanitan about a year ago, is beseiging Kabul and has vowed to oust Rabbani and establish a system based on Islamic Shariah law in Afghanistan.

Kabul Official on Improvement

BK3112143395 Hong Kong AFP in English 1418 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KABUL, Dec 31 (AFP) — A top Afghan official said Sunday there had been a "major and basic" improvement in relations between the Kabul government and its main rival, Uzbek warlord General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam.

Presidential spokesman 'Abdol Aziz Morad was speaking as the latest Afghan political drive towards a peaceful settlement of its bloody conflict appeared to be moving into top gear, officials here said.

He said he and a top-level delegation including Civil Aviation Minister Abdur Rachman had held friendly and productive talks with Dostam, who has been at war with the government since January 1994.

"The negotiations with Dostam after two years of fighting can be considered as very positive. He received us warmly and negotiations were carried out in a cordial atmosphere," Morad said.

"This is a major and basic change after two years of bloody fighting between us," he said in an unusually upbeat fashion. "Both sides declared that they were not willing to continue hostilities," he added.

"The sides agreed to co-operation between each other and pledged to resolve the conflict through understanding and negotiations."

The talks Friday followed an unprecedented offer by President Borhanoddin Rabbani to go to the strongholds of the leaders of the warring factions for talks on forming a new broad-based government.

Officials and observers said the negotiations with Dostam — Friday's round was held at Dostam's northern base of Mazaar-i-Sharif — were "close to being successfully concluded."

Morad said the talks were "preparing the ground" for a visit to Mazaar by Rabbani, which observers said appeared to be imminent. But he ruled out any military deal with Dostam to push back the Taleban militia besieging Kabul.

"A pact with Dostam will not be a military alliance. We have offered to hold negotiations with the Taleban as

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well and fortunately their response has been good," he said.

He said senior government negotiators were "working on the issue of sending a delegation for talks in the southern Taleban base at Kandhar, but gave no further details.

"The government is following the path of peace with serious determination, " he said.

He added that talks with ex-premier Golboddin Hekmatyar were also progressing "very well," as were negotiations with the powerful and neutral Nangarhar council, based in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

"We are hopeful that there will be peace soon as we have now also seen the willingness and optimism of the opposition in this regard," Moral faid.

The Taleban militia, the Rabbani administration's main military concern since they began a siege of the Afghan capital more than two months ago, had consistently refused to negotiate with Kabul, but appear to have softened their stance following Rabbani's offer.

The Islamic warriors, who rose up suddenly from the Koranic schools of southern Pakistan in 1994, have vowed to topple the government which they regard as illegitimate and to assume control of the country.

They claim to be the sole competent leaders of Afghanistan and have already won control over nearly half the country.

Dostam, a former communist general, split with the government in 1993 and joined forces with Hekmatyar to overthrow Rabbani. They launched a massive joint attack on Rabbani's troops exactly two years ago. Before the latest talks began, there had been persistent speculation here over whether Dostam and Hekmatyar — the two major opposition personalities here — would throw their weight behind either the government or the Taleban.

Government Meets With Dostam

LD3112193095 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday a high-ranking Kabul administration delegation accompanied by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister 'Ala'eddin Borujerdi, met General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam, the leader of the National Movement, in Sheberghan. The report says that Dostam allowed the delegation to meet him in Sheberghan after keeping them waiting for a long time. The report also says that Dostam reminded the Kabul administration delegation of its tarnished past and openly express his hatred of it.

It should be mentioned that nowadays Iran has again speeded up its efforts to gain supporters for the Kabul administration among its opponents.

Armed Conflict Said Terminated

LD0201075796 Tehran IRNA in English 0658 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Jan. 2, IRNA — Hostilities between Afghan governmental forces and the National Islamic Movement have ended, announced Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammad Akbari who led the delegation sent to Jalalabad in a meeting with General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam, chief of the National Islamic Movement.

Akbari who represented the government in the negotiations said the talks with Dostam and other officials in northern Afghanistan were 'positive'. He expressed confidence that the movement would not wage war against President Borhanoddin Rabbani's government.

Both sides called for terminating the armed conflict and continuing dialogue until all differences are settled and friendly ties established, Akbari added. Underlining the government's efforts to improve relations with various groups operating in Afghanistan, he said he hoped the Taleban would join the negotiation process.

The official also lauded Iran's attempts to unify the Islamic Unity Party [Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami] and Tehran's mediation efforts to bring about a settlement to the Afghan crisis.

Reportage on Rabbani Talks Offer, Taleban Response

Talks With Opposition Proposed

LD2912185595 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] According to reports received from Kabul, the so-called High State Council, chaired by Professor Rabbani, held a session on the occasion of the anniversary on 27 December of the dreadful event, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. At the end of this session a resolution was issued, inviting the opposition to hold talks and establish national reconciliation, in order to restore security in the country, ensure national unity, and safeguard the country's national interests.

According to another report, in a speech the head of Kabul administration said that he is ready to travel to the opposition's headquarters to hold talks.

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Political commentators say that the Kabul administration, on one hand, denounces the 27 December event and, on the other hand, makes its administration closer to the very Russians who are the main perpetrators of the killings and harassment of our persecuted nation. Finding itself in a difficult political and military position, Rabbani's administration is inviting the opposition for talks. However, when it finds itself in a comfortable situation it tramples on all its promises.

Group Rejects Offer

LD3012212895 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pashto 1230 GMT 30 Dec 95

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Taleban leaders have expressed their opposition to holding talks with Rabbani.

The Afghan president's proposal, inviting the leaders of the opposition group for direct talks, has met with a negative response from the Taleban group. However, the proposal was welcomed by the Coordination Council [led by Dostam].

The Taleban group is refusing to hold talks with Rabbani's government at a time when Rabbani's envoys, as reported, are holding talks with members of the Coordination Council in several places. For this reason, we cannot yet regard Rabbani's new proposal as a complete failure. However, what is not quite clear to observers of events in Afghanistan is the issue of Afghan leaders holding talks in circumstances in which there is a power vacuum. That is to say, the views of the Afghan groups on the conditions in which a distribution of power can take place are completely different from one another. In this connection, the Taleban group says that the Rabbani presidency is illegal and is calling for his resignation before starting talks. On the other hand, the ruling party in Kabul say that Rabbani's resignation should be delayed until the future share in political power of each party is cleared up.

Observers believe that, if the Afghan groups consider a political solution to be the practical way of putting an end to the hostilities, they should change their views about political power. The opposition of the Taleban to Rabbani's direct talks offer does not derive from differences between the two sides: since their emergence, the Taleban have refused to talk about the political power issue with any party. This stance of the Taleban has even led to the failure of their talks on military cooperation with other opponents of the government.

Despite the Taleban's firm insistence on their previous stance, there are certain factors indicating that the leaders of this group should hold direct talks with Rabbani's government. On the one hand, the Taleban are not in such a military position as to seize power across Afghanistan after capturing Kabul, and on the other hand the High Coordination Council, which is made up of four major military-political groups, has welcomed the talks offer by the government. So in the event of those two parties' cooperation, the Taleban will be further isolated. Informed people believe that it is only by political cooperation with other parties and by the adoption of a realistic policy that the Taleban can ensure the continuation of their present position.

Response Softens

BK3012150395 Hong Kong AFP in English 1438 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, Dec 30 (AFP) — The Afghan Taleban Islamic militia Saturday indicated a softening of their outright rejection of Kabul's offer of talks, saying its governing shura could consider it after receiving full details.

Taleban spokesman, Mufti Mohammad Masoom Afghani, who Friday dismissed Afghan President Borhannodin's offer as a "ruse", said once the details were given the Taleban leadership "may consider" the proposal.

Speaking to AFP from his base in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta after consulting with the Taleban leadership across the border at Qandahar inside Afghanistan, Masoom maintained that Rabbani was not "sincere."

Masoom did not explain what details the Taleban desired, saying only that Rabbani for instance should "tell to whom he is going to transfer power."

Reiterating that similar moves by Rabbani in the past had proved to be a "smokescreen" for attacks on the Taleban, Masoom said the Islamic movement was continuing its "preparations for a final assault" on Kabul, which it is besieging.

He denied accusations in Kabul that the Taleban rocketted the capital Thursday and late Friday. Reports from Kabul said eight people were killed and 41 injured in the attacks.

Masoom said after offering talks the government was making "false" allegations against the Taleban in a bid to "defame us," adding it showed that they "are insincere and only want to prolong their illegitimate rule."

He stressed the Taleban's "competence" to bring peace to war-torn Afghanistan. "We control 15 provinces (half

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of Afghanistan) where there is complete peace and people fully support us," he said.

Meanwhile, a key four-party Afghan opposition coalition is due to meet in northern Afghanistan Tuesday to decide a response to Rabbani's offer, a spokesman for Uzbek leader, General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam, said here.

The alliance groups Dostam's National Islamic Movement, former premier Golboddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Eslami, former president Sebghatollah Mojaddedi's Jabbah Nijat-e-Milli and the Shia Hezb-e Wahdat faction.

The spokesman, Sebghatollah Zaki, told AFP Dostam would personnally attend the Maszar-i-Sharif meeting of the coalition, called the Supreme Coordination Council of the Islamic Revolution in Afghanistan (SCCIRA).

On Friday, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Alaedin Bourjerdi met Dostam in Mazar and urged him to promote a settlement to the civil war through talks with Rabbani, Zaki said.

Bourjerdi, a frequent visitor to Kabul, told Dostam that Rabbani was willing to withdraw a fatwa (ruling by clerics) in 1994 which dubbed the Uzbek leader a non-Moslem and called for a jehad (holy war) against him, Zaki said.

Rabbani Thursday announced through his spokesman in Kabul that he was ready to travel to rivals' strongholds for talks on resolving the civil war.

The offer was interpreted as an unprecedented sign of flexibility on the part of the bleaguered Kabul government.

Said Ready To Talk

LD3112145395 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1052 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] After one and a half years of bloody war against Afghan Government forces, the Taleban group yesterday announced its readiness for the first time to hold talks with Borhanoddin Rabbani's government. This stance by the Taleban, which is in response to Rabbani's proposal last week for talks with all the opposition, follows the acceptance of the proposal by the other opposition groups. The Taleban decision is based on several issues and will have determining consequences. That is why Afghan affairs experts believe the mere fact of the acceptance to consider the talks plan as a positive step in Afghan political developments which goes towards the strengthening of the process to seek peace in that country, even though they bear in mind the probability that the Taleban may reject Rabbani's proposal after studying it. They believe that the Taleban group has had no choice but to follow the other groups in this in order to attract the confidence of the other Afghan groups and parties. That is because since this Esfand [Iranian month ending 20 March 1995], when the Taleban advance on Kabul stopped the process of power transition in Afghanistan, Afghan political circles consider the group as the main factor in the continuation of the crisis in that country and, naturally, the group has to make the wise choice of conducting negotiations in order to erase that concept of its political position in Afghanistan.

Political experts put forward several reasons for the change in the Taleban stance from war and hostility to negotiation and reconciliation. First, after one and a half years of military confrontation with the government and despite twice reaching the gates of Kabul, the Taleban armed forces have failed to seriously threaten Rabbani's government. That military failure caused the group to take reactive measures, including the shelling of civilian areas of Kabul, thus provoking public opinion against itself. The other is the Taleban's reliance on purely military forces in order to promote its aims. That deprived the group of the political and ideological support necessary for its activities and for rationalizing its war against the government and, in practice, it turned the group into an armed and belligerent group. That is why it seems that the group, sensing its political isolation within the context of the Afghan groups and parties, has come to the conclusion that it must divert part of its potential from the military section to political concerns. The Taleban's sense of danger was increased last week when all the parties which are members of the Supreme Coordination Council — that is Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party], Hezb- e Wahdat-e Eslami [Islamic Unity Party], and the North Afghan Movement — declared their readiness to negotiate with Rabbani's government. Another reason put forward by experts for the cautious and conditional approach by the Taleban for negotiating with the Afghan government is the failure of their supra-regional efforts and the irresponsible acts by some foreign countries in their relations with some groups aimed at determining the fate of the Afghan people. Those efforts, which in recent months — especially after the visit by the U.S. deputy secretary of state to the region — prevented the group taking up an effective role on the Afghan political scene.

At any rate, the new Taleban stance — which to a certain extent leads the group away from military aggression towards political negotiations aimed at settling disputes with the Afghan government and the other parties and groups in that country — is a positive step which, if continued, can be considered as one of the determining

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factors for the settlement of the three-year-old conflict among Afghan groups and the liberation of the Afghan people from a futile war.

Further Reportage on Taleban Attacks on Kabul

New Round Predicted

LD2912190495 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] For some time now the belligerent parties in the fighting around Kabul have been making preparations for another round of fighting.

According to eye-witnesses, a number of Taleban and other fighting men have been seen recently going to Kabul from Kandahar and Paktika Provinces to fight for the Taleban group. The Taleban group, apparently, is preparing for a new round of fighting.

Masum Afghani, a Taleban spokesman, said: We are making preparations for another broad attack on Kabul before the cold weather sets in there. Afghani added: We are engaged in (?bringing) our men from other provinces and we are putting our weapons in position. The Rabbani administration must go before the end of the winter.

Three Killed in Rocket Attack

LD2912175295 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Kabul was the target of rocket attacks by Benazir Bhutto's Taleban last night and today.

A BAKHTAR correspondent reports that the residential areas of Kabul were the target of seven rockets last night and today. As a result of these rocket strikes, three Kabul citizens were killed and another six were injured. The rockets were fired from the southern direction.

Fighting Intensifies in Konduz

LD3012144995 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A responsible source in Konduz Province has told a Radio Message of Freedom correspondent that fighting has intensified between members of the Kabul administration. The report says that clashes have been going on in Angor Bagh, Konduz City, between Commander Mirza Mohammad Naseri and Commander Mir Alam, attached to the Mahaz-e Meli, and the Ettehad's commanders — Sher Mohammad and Gholam. Four people from both sides have been killed during the fighting.

The report says that in addition to the loss of military men, the civilian population have also sustained heavy losses. Haji Mohebollah, one of the famouse figures in this region, has been killed.

Four Dead, 26 Wounded in Attack

BK0101092896 Hong Kong AFP in English 0913 GMT 1 Jan 96

[Report by Marc Lavine]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KABUL, Jan 1 (AFP) — Four children were killed and 26 other civilians injured in a New Year's eve rocket attack on the embattled Afghan capital, witnesses said Monday.

One child was killed outright as he played with friends in the dusty streets near their homes, while three toddlers died of their injuries in the capital's hospitals, local residents and hospitals said.

The 26 other victims of the rain of Soviet-built rockets were treated in Kabul's main hospitals, the emergency wards of which are well used to patching up war-wounded Kabulis, doctors said.

The final barrage of 1995, which came as a new Afghan peace drive moved into top gear, brought the total of those killed in + rocket and shell attacks in December to at least 72 with nearly 200 injured, doctors and witnesses said.

The salvo of around 14 rockets was fired by the Taleban militia encamped around Kabul and hit southern residential area of the city late Sunday, defence officials said.

"The kids were playing a game in the street when the rockets came in," local resident Mohammed Rahim told AFP. "At first we could hear the excited shouting of children having fun, and suddenly the noise turned to screams of pain."

"It was really a terrible tragedy because three of the children were from the same family of refugees who had already lost another child in an earlier rocket attack," he added.

Nearby residents scooped up the children and other people injured by the jagged shards of shrapnel and packed them into taxis and private cars for transportation to Kabul's hospitals, other locals said.

No independent confirmation of who was responsible for the attack was however immediately available here.

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The latest salvo, a daily occurrence here since the Taleban arrived on the outskirts of Kabul in mid-October, came as government jets bombed Taleban positions south of Kabul, witnesses in the area said.

Officials could not confirm the raid, but the latest hostilities came just four days after the government proposed talks aimed at ending the conflict to the warring factions, including the Taleban.

President Borhanoddin Rabbani's unprecedented offer to factional leaders to travel to provincial strongholds for talks on forming a new broad-based administration has triggered a frenzied bout of shuttle diplomacy by top government officials.

Rabbani's spokesman 'Abdol Aziz Morad said Sunday that officials were studying the issue of dispatching a negotiating team to the southern Taleban stronghold of Kandahar, while saying that talks with other major factions were progressing "very well."

He said there had been a "major and basic" change for the better in relations between Kabul and its northern rival, Uzbek warlord General Rashid Dostam. Meanwhile, speculation was mounting here Monday that Kabul was on the verge of signing a peace pact or alliance that would end two years of fighting between the government and the powerful Uzbek leader.

However, foreign analysts here warned it would be far more difficult for the government to strike a compromise with the Taleban, who control 11 of Afghanistan's 32 provinces, than it would be for them to seal alliances with the other warring groups.

Aircraft Attack Taleban Positions

LD0101154496 Tehran IRNA in English 1510 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Jan. 1, IRNA — The Afghan Government military aircraft attacked positions of Afghan student militias, Taleban in Rishkhor and Khairabad regions in south of Kabul Sunday afternoon, announced official sources on Monday, without giving any detail.

Meanwhile, heavy artillery duels resumed between government troops and the Talebans in the regions situated in south and southwest of the capital city Monday morning notably.

Official sources in Kabul maintain that the resumption of artillery and air attacks was due to the Taleban's rejection of a proposal made by President Borhanoddin Rabbani to hold talks with all opposition groups.

In the meantime, some 21 civilians mostly women and children, were reportedly killed or wounded in Kabul in rocket attacks on the city during Sunday night by the Taleban. According to the press bureau of the Afghan Defence Ministry, at least 14 rockets and artillery shells were fired at Kabul Sunday night.

Some 1500 residents of Kabul are believed to have been killed or wounded in several attacks of the Taleban on the city in recent months.

India

Police Sight Western Hostages in Kashmir

BK2912143595 Hong Kong AFP in English 1417 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] SRINAGAR, India Dec 29 (AFP) — Four Western tourists seized by Muslim militants in Kashmir have been sighted for the first time since their abductors fought a gunbattle with Indian troops this month, police said Friday [29 December].

The foreigners were seen by locals on December 23 in the mountainous village of Hakura, nearly 55 kilometers (34 miles) south of here, along with 20 or 30 gunmen, police sources quoted villagers as saying.

The gunmen included both foreign mercenaries and Kashmiri militants, the sources said, adding that the four abducted men — two Britons, an American and a German — appeared to be in good health.

It was the first time the Westerners were sighted since the Al-Faran group which is holding them claimed December 11 that three of the foreigners had been taken away by Indian troops a week earlier.

Al-Faran had then said that three of the tourists were seized by soldiers following a gunbattle with Muslim separatists in a village nearly 60 kilometers (37 miles) south of Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital.

Indian officials denied the allegation, and said the abducted men were still with Al-Faran. The gunbattle had left four militants dead.

Britons Paul Wells, 23, and Keith Mangan, 33, American Donald Hutchings, 42, and German Dirk Hassert, 26, were abducted by Al- Faran in early July near the Kashmir resort of Pahalgam.

The previously unknown group had also kidnapped a fifth tourist, 27-year-old Norwegian Hans-Christian Ostro. He was beheaded in August.

Al-Faran, which Indian says is a splinter faction of the Harkat- ul-Ansar separatist outfit comprising Afghan fighters, is demanding the release of 15 of its jailed comrades in a sweep for the Western tourists.

New Delhi has rejected the demand.

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More than 12,000 people have died by official count in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, in a Muslim separatist drive raging since 1989.

More on Sighting of Hostages

BK0101113796 Hong Kong AFP in English 1120 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] SRINAGAR, India, Jan 1 (AFP) — Four Western tourists kidnapped by Muslim separatist guerrillas six months ago have been seen in southern Kashmir and appear to be in good health, police said Monday [1 January].

Police chief Mahinder Sabherwal said the authorities were monitoring the movements of the hostages and their kidnappers, members of the Muslim separatist group Al-Faran.

"We are being informed by local sources about their movements," the police chief told a news conference in this Kashmir summer capital. "The four are still in the custody of Al-Faran."

Sabherwal confirmed reports that the hostages had been sighted since a December 4 clash between Indian troops and suspected Al-Faran guerrillas in which a leader of the group was killed.

He said Britons Paul Wells and Keith Mangan, American Donald Hutchings and German Dirk Hasert had been seen by villagers in southern Kashmir and they appeared to be in good health.

Wells, Mangan and Hutchings were kidnapped by Al-Faran on July 4 while on separate trekking vacations in the Kashmiri Himalayas.

Hasert was seized on July 8, the same day as Hans-Christian Ostro, a Norwegian tourist slain by the kidnappers in August.

The Indian government has rejected repeated offers by Al-Faran to swap the hostages for 15 imprisoned Muslim separatist guerrillas.

Sabherwal declined to comment directly on a British newspaper report that the kidnappers had been in touch with the British High Commission (embassy) in New Delhi.

"We have had no contact with Al-Faran since November 26 and no negotiations are presently taking place with the group," he said.

An Indian army officer said meanwhile that three suspected Al-Faran militants taken into custody following the December 4 clash in the village of Dabrin had been released.

"The three were found innocent and set free after interrogation," said Brigadier P.P.S. Bindra, the chief of army operations.

Bindra reiterated that the military was not planning a rescue operation. "Our prime objective is the safety of the four captives," he said. "And I have directed my boys not to provoke the captors even if they see them."

The Muslim separatist drive in Kashmir, India's only Muslim- majority state, has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989.

Police Chief Says Hostages 'Safe'

BK0101160196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The four Western hostages held by the militant outfit Al-Faran are safe. Speaking at a press conference in Srinagar today, the director general of Jammu and Kashmir police, Mr. M.N. Sabharwal, said the government has information where the hostages were kept. He confirmed that the four Westerners were seen recently along with 20 militants in south Kashmir. Mr. Sabharwal said for the security and safety of hostages, the government is not launching any military operation to rescue them.

The police chief said the state government is considering to seek the help of Interpol to arrest Mast Gul [Pakistani national], who was involved in the destruction of Charar Sharif shrine.

New Delhi, Islamabad Nuclear Lists Exchanged

BK0101155796 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India and Pakistan today exchanged through diplomatic channels the lists of nuclear installations and facilities as part of confidence-building measures agreed upon earlier by the two countries. Under the 1988 agreement, the two countries will inform each other of the nuclear installations and facilities on 1 January of each calendar year.

Mukherjee Welcomes Bhutto Remarks on Talks

BK0101092096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, has welcomed the statement of the Pakistani prime minister, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, expressing her desire for resumption of dialogue with the prime minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, to resolve the Kashmir issue. Talking to newspersons at Guwahati today, Mr. Mukherjee said that New Delhi has always been in favor of such a dialogue without any preconditions.

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He said the statement of the Pakistani prime minister is being studied carefully.

Government Reviews Investigations Into Arms Drop

BK3112093195 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The center today undertook an exhaustive review of the investigations into the Purulia arms dropping case and felt that international angle needed to be pursued vigorously. The special meeting chaired by the home secretary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, stressed the need for effective coordination amongst concerned agencies to speed up the investigations. PTI quoting official sources says the meeting was of the view that the progress in investigations is quite satisfactory.

The center conveyed its concern to the West Bengal government over the nonrecovery of a portion of the airdropped consignment. It suggested that thorough combing operations be undertaken to seize the missing weapons. It has also asked the Bihar government to launch a search for the weapons in the areas neighboring Purulia.

Meanwhile, the committee headed by the special secretary in the Home Ministry, Mr. B.K. Jain, has recommended that an institutional mechanism be evolved for interagency cooperation and coordination to prevent incidents such as arms dropping in Purulia. The committee submitted its report to the cabinet secretary in New Delhi today.

Meanwhile, two businessmen arrested from Delhi on Monday [25 December] in connection with the arms dropping in Purulia have been remanded to police custody for seven more days. They were taken from Calcutta to Purulia and were produced before the subdivisional judicial magistrate this evening. They are to be produced at the court again on the 6th of next month.

Daily: British Suspect Informed London of Arms Drop

BK0201052296 Hong Kong AFP in English 0435 GMT 2 Jan 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] NEW DELHI Jan 2 (AFP) — A key suspect involved in the air-dropping of crates of weapons from a Russian-made plane in eastern India had allegedly informed British authorities about the deal at the last minute, a daily said Tuesday.

Peter Bleach allegedly informed the police Special Branch through a British-based firm about the arms-drop when he realised the deal was "of a fishy nature and meant for illegal activities," the Times of India newspaper said.

The daily quoted officials from the Central Bureau of Intelligence (CBI), the Indian government's premier detective agency, as saying that Bleach, a Briton, got the go-ahead from the Special Branch which said "necessary action would be taken at the right time."

Bleach told CBI officials that he wanted to "cheat the party without causing any financial loss to myself," the Times report from the eastern city of Calcutta said, adding that the move was probably an 11th-hour attempt for immunity.

CBI officials said the British Special Branch alerted Indian authorities about the arms-drop, mentioning two possible sites in the eastern state of Bihar.

Bleach and five Latvians have been held for air-dropping 300 assault rifles, 81 anti-tank grenades, and 20,000 rounds of ammunition estimated to be worth 10 million dollars on December 17 in West Bengal state, of which Calcutta is capital.

The six are charged with sedition, which carries the death sentence. The owner of the AN-26 plane, a New Zealander, however managed to escape after two Indian MiG fighters forced the crew to land in Bombay on December 22 while en route to the Pakistani city of Karachi.

The Times said Bleach had demanded an additional 75,000 dollars after "sensing the illegal nature of the deal," to the 50,000 dollars paid in advance after the deal was finalised in Copenhagen in September with a certain Peter Haestup.

The newspaper gave no details about Haestup but said Bleach, a former defence services officer, had earlier allegedly helped the British newspaper News of the World with an expose on how the Irish Republican Army acquired AK-47 rifles.

The CBI claims to have seized photographs from the AN-26 crew identifying the drop zone as a white bungalow belonging to a secretive Hindu sect called Ananda Marg (Happy Path) in the West Bengal district of Purulia.

The group had denied involvement but an unidentified senior Home Ministry official in New Delhi told the daily that the group was still under suspicion. "They were not the end-users but we believe they were the first recipients," he said.

Indian authorities, who have not been able to identify the recipient of the arms, say the weapons were mainly

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bought from Bulgaria and that the transporter mainly flew to Phuket in Thailand and then criss-crossed Indian airspace.

Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan has accused India's arch-rival Pakistan of organising the baffling air-drop.

Plane Crew Involved in Arms Drop Under Police Custody

BK0101133896 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In West Bengal, the six crew members of the Russian AN-26 aircraft involved in the sensational arms drop in Purulia villages on the 17th of last month were today remanded to police custody. They will be produced in a court at Purulia on the 8th of this month. The CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] had earlier prayed for a 14-day remand, and there was no bail petition for the accused. The court also allowed the CBI petition for issuing of a nonbailable warrant of arrest against one person apart from the accused.

Information Sought on Crew

BK3112163395 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] has sought information from Interpol in five foreign countries as part of the ongoing probe into the Purulia arms dropping incident. The countries include Bulgaria, Thailand, Hong Kong, Latvia and Britain. The CBI sought information on the antecedents of the five Latvians and a Briton who were arrested from the AN-26 aircraft involving the arms dropping. The messages to these countries have been sent on the basis of certain confessions made by those arrested.

Assam Minister Escapes Suspected Militant Ambush

BK3112091195 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Assam, suspected militants ambushed the convoy of the state health minister, Dr. Bhumidhar Barman, at Laupara in Nalbari District last night. Three persons were killed on the spot and 10 injured. Dr. Barman escaped unhurt. The militants also managed to escape in the cover of darkness. Dr. Barman reportedly left his car and managed to reach on foot the nearby police station. This was the third attack on the life of the minister. The security forces have launched a massive combing operation to nab the culprits.

Police Arrest 'Dreaded' Kashmiri 'Militant'

BK2912161595 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Delhi police today arrested a dreaded Pak-trained Kashmiri militant in a joint operation with Army intelligence. A dismissed constable turned militant and a member of the Hizbul Mujahideen, Bashir Ahmad Malik, came to the capital to disrupt the Republic Day parade. The additional deputy commissioner of police, Mr. T.S. Lutra, told newsmen that several maps of different areas, including a route map of the parade, were recovered from his possession.

In Jammu and Kashmir, five hard-core militants surrendered before the security forces in Doda District today. Four of these belong to the outlawed, Al Jehad Force, and the fifth was a Harkatul Ansar activist. PTI quoting Defense Ministry sources reports the arms laid down by the ultras included one AK-47 rifle and three Chinese-made pistols.

Suspected 'Militants' Kill 4; Explosives Seized

BK3012085695 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Assam, suspected militants shot dead four persons, including a women, and injured nine others at Barpeta Road town yesterday evening. According to official reports received at Guwahati, the militants attacked simultaneously at three separate locations of the town. Hand grenades were also reportedly lobbed by them. They fled away before the security force personnel reached the spot. A massive hunt is on to nab the culprits.

In Punjab, 7 kg of RDX was seized from a place in the Focal Point area in Ludhiana yesterday. The deadly explosive material was packed in a plastic cover and buried underground. The information regarding this was provided to the police by Jagtar Singh Hawara, who was earlier arrested in connection with the assassination of former chief minister Beant Singh.

Arms, Explosives Recovered in Punjab

BK3112080095 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Punjab Police have recovered 18 kg of RDX from a suspected militant arrested near Nava in Patiala District last night. Ten pencil bombs, 60 detonators, six remote control devices, and some other arms and ammunition were also recovered. This was stated by the state police chief, Mr. K.P.S. Gill, at a press conference in Patiala today. The police

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had seized 58 kg of RDX and some other explosive devices from the district last week.

Two Alleged Killers of Punjab Chief Minister Arrested

BK0101040396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Ludhiana police have arrested two militants believed to be involved in the assassination of the former Punjab chief minister, Beant Singh. The police party also seized one AK-47 rifle and some ammunition from them. Meanwhile, one of the prime accused, Mr. Jagtar Singh Hawara, arrested on the 22nd of last month has been remanded to police custody till the ninth of this month.

More on Operations of Remote Satellite IRS-1C

BK2912150695 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] All systems on board the IRS-1C satellite are functioning normally. The camera payloads are expected to be switched on in about a week.

According to a press release by the Indian Space Research Organization, Bangalore, the panchromatic camera steering hold-down mechanism was successfully released today. The import operation will enable taking imagery of the same area from two different angles. The high-resolution data will help get digital terrain knots which will be used for micro-level planning and urban studies.

Iran

Tehran Voices 'Amazement' at Damascus Statement

LD2912121995 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 29 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The spokesman of the our country's Foreign Ministry has expressed amazement about the one-sided statement of the session of the foreign ministers of the so-called six-plus-two countries. He called on those countries to concentrate on the Zionist regime, which seeks to dominate Arab and Muslim countries, instead of issuing such divisive statements.

Describing Iran's ownership of the three [Gulf] islands [Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunb] as permanent, Mr. [Mahmud] Mohammadi expressed regret about the recent stance taken by Damascus declaration member countries and their disregard for Iran's goodwill. He added: The Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly demonstrated its goodwill and earnestness by declaring that it is ready to hold talks with the United Arab Emirates to find a solution for the misunderstandings between the two countries, within the framework of the letter written by Shaykh Zayid to the esteemed president of the Islamic Republic of Iran; for Foreign Minister Velayati to go to Abu Dhabi, and also to take part in the talks between experts in Qatar. It declares that the invitation to the UAE foreign minister to continue the talks still stands.

He added: The best way to resolve misunderstandings is to avoid the hue and cry of propaganda and the repetition of empty remarks, and to hold direct talks. It would be better for Muslim, Arab countries in the region to use their resources to strengthen ties between Islamic countries and solve the problems in the world of Islam and remove the rule of the Zionists in occupied lands.

Vice President Cancels Visit to Damascus

LD3012175195 Tehran IRNA in English 1707 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 30, IRNA — Visit to Syria of Iran's first vice-president, Hasan Habibi, has been postponed.

An informed official at the presidential office told IRNA that the first vice-president's visit to Damascus has been called off. Habibi has not set any date for making the trip, he added.

On Thursday last 'AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE' had said that Dr. Habibi is due to fly to Syria this week to attend a meeting of the joint cooperation committee between Syria and Iran.

Syrian Envoy Assures Foreign Ministry of Friendship

LD3112172995 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Syria's ambassador in Tehran, today, at noon, visited our country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conveyed the oral message of his country's foreign minister — concerning the recent stance adopted by member states of the Damascus Declaration towards the Iranian islands of the Persian Gulf — to Mr. Hoseyn Sheykholeslam, deputy foreign minister for the affairs of Arab and African countries.

According to the Central News Unit, in the message, Syria's officials have emphasized the strategic nature of relations between the two countries. The message states: Syria has never relinquished its friendship with

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the Islamic Republic of Iran and will not provide those who want to harm these relations any opportunity to do so. And Syria has always supported and will continue to support the Islamic Republic of Iran in public forums, international organizations and different sessions.

Papers Criticize Damascus Communique on Gulf Islands

LD3112134995 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1510 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Jomhuri-ye Eslami newspaper in its editorial today has condemned the stance of the Six-Plus-Two [Damascus Declaration] Group in their meeting in Damascus concerning the Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf [Greater and Lesser Tumbs and Abu Musa] as clumsy propaganda and in keeping with U.S. propaganda aims. The newspaper writes: The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council [PGCC] is one of the loudspeakers which America uses in order to engage in propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Every so often by adding two other members — namely Egypt and Syria — to it, the United States tries to strengthen that organization.

The editorial continues: This shameful effort of the six-plus- two session has been made under conditions when in different parts of the world popular organizations, even the high-ranking officials of Islamic countries, have protested against the allocation of a $20-million fund by the United States for engaging in acts of sabotage in Iran and have called for confronting that conspiracy by the Great Satan.

This newspaper has criticized the Damascus government for hosting the Six-Plus-Two session and approving the contents of its communique.

The KEYHAN newspaper has also described the communique from the Damascus session as divisive. Criticizing Syria for getting in line with U.S. propaganda, this newspaper regards the timing of this communique which coincides with Damascus-Tel Aviv talks as suspicious.

The same newspaper asks those who took part in the Damascus conference what benefit would the Arab nations derive, by getting in line with moves against Islamic solidarity and by opposing Iran, in their attempts to confront the ambitions of the Zionist regime.

In conclusion, the writer of the editorial regards the adoption of such stances as being solely in the interest of the Zionist regime.

Prospects for Israel-Syria Accord Viewed

LD2912202695 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1530 GMT 29 Dec 95

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] On Friday 29 December, representative delegations of Syria and the Zionist regime ended their three-day talks in Maryland State in America. Based on the schedule the next round of talks is due to resume on 3 January.

Political analysts of Middle East affairs say the first round of talks mainly concerned the alterations in the positions of the two sides. Therefore, as expected, no considerable result was yielded from the first round of the dialogues. Despite optimism of mass media on finding a new solution to end the deadlock between the two sides, most experts hold the view that the optimism is mainly aimed at encouraging the two sides to reach a final decision. However, even the very optimist ones know the differences between Syria and Israel are so deep and serious that a final solution does not seem likely in near future.

Since negotiators prefer keeping the dialogues as secret, no definite news has yet been released. Therefore Israel apparently agrees with leaving the Golan Heights. But the differences remain on the manner and extent of Israeli withdrawal from the Heights. Syria has given the consent on Israeli withdrawal as far as the border Tiberias Lake. But the Zionist regime does not desire serious control over the lake. Nevertheless, most analysts believe that Zionist regime performance during the past four years has clearly proven that this regime is seeking expansion of cultural, political, and economic influence in the region and the world. Any concession by the regime is therefore equal to giving more important concessions to stabilize its expansionist possessions in the region. Since peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without Syria, the Zionists have decided to reach their final goal by losing a part of the occupied lands to legitimize their illegitimate rule in the region. They, however, disregard the fact that their illegitimacy in the region is not an issue to be forgotten by signing a peace deal with Syria. This is an undeniable fact that the dominant and aggressive nature of the Zionist regime cannot be changed through reaching agreements with Arab governments.

Rally Planned To Protest U.S. 'Conspiracies'

LD3112143795 Tehran IRNA in English 1424 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec 31 (IRNA) — A protest rally will be held in Tehran on Tuesday

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[2 January] in protest at the new conspiracies of Washington against the Islamic Republic of Iran and the silence of the international circles on U.S. violation of international laws.

A group of Muslim people residing in Tehran issued a statement on Sunday, announcing that the rally would be held at 7th Tir Square, northern Tehran with participants shouting the "Death to the United States" slogan.

The demonstrators will pass through Tehran's northern streets to gather in front of the United Nations office in Tehran.

The U.S. administration has embarked upon several anti-Iran measures including declaration of a trade embargo and banning U.S. firms from investing in Iranian oil development projects.

The U.S. Congress has recently approved a dlrs. 20 million budget to be spent on covert actions aimed at toppling the Iranian Government as well as a plan to boycott foreign companies dealing with Iran.

Reaction to U.S. Decision on 'Terrorism' Noted

NC0101073596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0445 GMT 1 Jan 96

[Commentary by News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] The U.S. Government's recent decision to resort to overt terrorism and subversive acts against the Islamic Republic of Iran has sparked strong reactions in both domestic and international circles. Yesterday more than 180 Majles deputies condemned the approval of an overt budget for the White House's state terrorism and called on the international community to seriously react against this decision, which is a blatant violation of international principles and interference in the domestic affairs of an independent country. In their statement, the Majles deputies expressed support for the proposal by Majles Speaker, Nateq-Nuri, on approving a budget to confront Washington's state terrorism against our country.

There have also been reactions in other countries and in international political and press circles on the White House's decision to allocate a budget for subversion and espionage against the Islamic Republic of Iran. In Pakistan, Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali and a large number of senators expressed their solidarity with the Iranian nation vis-a-vis American plots, have said that the allocation of a budget for covert acts against the Islamic Republic of Iran is a blatant violation of international law by the American ruling class, and have described it as a terrorist act. Many political and religious dignitaries, as well as various groups in Islamic countries have condemned the American Government's new decision against our country.

Meanwhile, the United Nations, other competent international forums, and Western governments are not reacting in the least bit and our foreign minister's letter to the UN secretary general that explained the details, dimensions, and consequences of the state terrorism ruling America and called for an immediate and decisive international step against Washington's hegemonism and breach of law has remained unanswered.

Oddly enough, Western countries and international organizations sometimes consider defensive struggles by nations against the enemy's aggression as terrorism, while they do not utter one word on the American Government's overt statement that it has approved a budget for espionage and subversive acts against an independent country.

Naturally, the approval of this overt budget does not speak of a major change in the quality of America's covert operations against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which have existed since the victory of the Islamic Revolution. However, what this step has been able to achieve is that it has, at last, disgraced the true masters of state terrorism and proven the emptiness of the advocators of anti- terrorism in the West.

Speaker Denounces 'Irrational, Unfair' U.S. Policy

LD3112142395 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Speech by Speaker 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri to the Majles on 31 December — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] As you know, in the past few weeks the U.S. Congress has made two decisions which are irrational, unfair and even, I have to say, spiteful and foolish. One concerns non- American companies which work with Iran in the oil and gas spheres. The other is the allocation of a $20-million budget to interfere in Iran's domestic affairs and, as they put it, to topple the order in Iran.

Of course, as pointed out by the esteemed leader [Ayatollah Khamene'i], this action is not new. Since the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran the United States has been drawing up plans to topple the order, implementing them one after the other. However, this has failed to do a damn thing.

This is not the first U.S. action and it is not the first case of trouble being caused in this context but, up to now, they have conducted such behavior in secret: Coups plots one after the other, the Nozheh coup [in

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early 1980's], and other coups. Turning their embassy into a den of espionage was a direct intervention in our affairs and the events at Tabas [the abortive attempt to rescue the embassy hostages] were acts of aggression against our territory and country. During the war they intervened directly and supported the Iraqi regime. This was direct intervention in Iran's affairs and a policy to topple [the Iranian Government]. The downing of an Iranian civilian airline violated all international principles, laws, and regulations. And there were more.

It is not as if the United States is only beginning. They have spent billions of dollars so far for the destabilization plan. However the latest act perpetrated by the U.S. Congress in allocating $20 million for a destabilization plan is a clear confession of state terrorism. Twenty million dollars to topple [the government] on which they have spent billions of dollars already.

Through reliance on God and the guidance of the esteemed leader, the Guardian of the Muslim Cause, and through the support of a brave and heroic nation who have been on the scene with honesty and sincerity and who have become more determined, serious, and more united whenever you Americans tried to trick or deceive — and as the third Shiite Imam, peace be upon him, has stated God has chosen fools as our enemies whose acts are a cause of benefit — through such popular support and through reliance on God we shall stand against any form of encroachment and aggression that you might choose. We shall cut the hands off any aggressor or mercenary who might want to commit an act of treachery against this territory and this order and we shall defend the borders of this Islamic order and this territory of Islamic Iran to the point of death. [deputies chant "Death to the United States"]

Hashemi-Rafsanjani Cites U.S. 'Conspiracies'

LD2712153395 Tehran IRNA in English 1510 GMT 27 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA — President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani on Wednesday [27 December] highly appreciated the sacrifices made by the war veterans whom he described as those who inspired and guided the culture and history of the Islamic Revolution.

The president was speaking to a group of model disabled war veterans on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Hazrat Abulfazl-al-Abbas, the brother of Imam Husayn (a.s.), the third imam of the infallible household of prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

He said the disabled war veterans, thanks to their revolutionary spirit and strong religious faith, have turned into effective figures in improving social behaviour in the islamic society.

President Rafsanjani said the disabled war veterans despite their physical handicaps have not abandoned their ideals, nor have they laid down their arms or fallen behind other strata of society in pursuing the sacred goals of the islamic revolution.

The president pointing to the numerous conspiracies of the U.S. against the Islamic Republic of Iran and failure of all those schemes, said the disabled war veterans are in fact the symbols of those harmed by the satanic plots of the U.S.

The disabled war veterans are the evidence of invulnerability of the Islamic Republic and the cruelty, monopolism and hypocritical policies of the U.S., President Rafsanjani said.

Today, the president said, the U.S. is attempting to tread the same path that it had gone through in the past due to its failure to understand the realities or learn a lesson from the past. This time too it (the U.S.) would get nowwhere, he added.

In the meantime, President Rafsanjani outlined his government's programmes for helping the disabled war veterans participate in the country's infrastructural plans including agriculture and other development projects.

Editorial on U.S. Covert Operations Program

NC2912123295 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 23 Dec 95 p 2

[Editorial: "Washington's New Anti-Iran Moves Confrontation With Majority of World Countries"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A 20-million-dollar covert, anti-Iranian program was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday [21 December]!!! On the same day, the Senate approved a bill tightening current U.S. sanctions against Iran by punishing foreign firms that invest in Iran's oil industry.

It is a bare instance of interference not only in Iranian internal affairs but in internal affairs of more than one hundred countries which maintain trade relations with Iran.

The U.S. moves, the 20-million-dollar anti-Iran program and the Senate bill, are negative and positive both. They are negative because they augur U.S. bullying and domineering in what the American politicians term as the new world order; they are positive because they show that the U.S. dream of the new world order is not coming true as President Bush and President Clinton expected.

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George Bush rushed into a war in the Persian Gulf precisely because he regarded the region as constituting the nerve center of the industrial economies. Exactly after the collapse of the Soviet Union American officials, overenthusiastic about the new order, openly announced that the U.S. would lead the world.

The U.S. officials envisaged that a U.S. naval presence in the Persian Gulf would enable them to dominate and control a region endowed with 63 percent of the world's proven oil resources. Although about 42 percent of Western Europe's oil supplies and 62 percent of Japan's oil requirements are met from the Persian Gulf, the U.S. presence in the region has not forced Japan and Europe to submit to U.S. bullying.

The new world order is not a unipolar one. The U.S. yester- year's strategic allies have virtually turned out to be its economic competitors. They have so far said a big "No" to Washington's bullying. American officials are lashing a dead horse in their new move to punish Iran's trade partners.

U.S. politicians have been playing Iran's card in election competitions. Zionist circles have had a decisive influence on U.S. politicians in this dirty game.

However, time is not on the U.S. side. Even a dull student of political science can easily foresee that the U.S. new move is doomed to fail. It is not possible to interfere in domestic affairs of all members of the community of nations; it is impossible to punish them all.

The American civilization is on decline. Instead of confronting all members of international community, the White House should follow a conciliatory policy not only towards Iran but towards all economic partners of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The only alternative to a conciliatory policy is failure after failure.

'Preventive' Measures Urged Against U.S. 'Schemes'

NC2912093795 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 26 Dec 95 pp 1, 15

[Editorial: "The Need for Preventive Measures"]

[FBIS Translated Text] America has approved a bill allocating $20 million for subversive and terrorist acts against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This is a foolish act aimed at violating international laws and interfering in others' domestic affairs. It should be met by an appropriate answer to Washington so that the American decisionmaking centers will see the consequences of their act and will review their antihuman and illegal acts. Let us not forget that America's decision also violates Washington's commitments in the Algiers Declaration. Islamic Iran cannot remain indifferent to all this and sit back idly, hoping that America will abandon its crimes and terrorist acts through guidance, advice, and warnings.

America's attempts to propagate the law of the jungle and to trample on international laws anytime it wishes complicates things in today's disturbed world in a way that cannot be ignored. If everyone else resorts to the same methods and instruments against America, America will be more vulnerable than any other country, because, worldwide, people have appropriate reasons for retaliating in a way that threatens American interests. Fortunately, America has created enough enemies for itself in the world today.

America's hostility and spite against Iran are nothing new. But in the past 16 years America has been unable to do anything. If nations want to retaliate, America is extremely vulnerable, because it tops the list of satans who use state terrorism to achieve their goals.

We would now like to address the respected Majles deputies who shoulder a serious and diligent responsibility. This responsibility dictates that they act to safeguard the people's lives, take measures to defend Iranian interests and, above all, make the criminal enemy who is overtly trying to upset Islamic Iran's security and order and has allocated an official budget for murder, crime, and terrorist acts to regret its actions. As a first step, the Majles should set aside a special fund for helping anti-American liberation movements worldwide—in any way it considers appropriate—and to target American interests everywhere to prevent America from acting first and make it regret its crimes against Islamic Iran. This is a "preventive measure," which can be fully justified on the basis of international laws and regulations, because America fomented all this. Naturally, Washington, with all its idiotic decisions, is directly responsible for the consequences of any preventive step against America.

It is an urgent duty for the Majles to approve such a budget and thus create the favorable grounds for preventive measures against America and to not give America a free hand to perpetrate crimes against Iranian people. There can be no delay. To safeguard the just rights of the Iranian nation and government and to ensure the country's national security, Islamic Iran has the legal and moral right to adopt preventive measures against America and to destroy the centers of plots against its people and thwart America's satanic schemes.

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Russian Deputy Prime Minister Continues Visit

Agrees To Join in Oil Exploration

LD2812141695 Tehran IRNA in English 1313 GMT 28 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 28, IRNA — Visiting Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Oleg D. Davydov and Iranian Oil Minister Gholam Reza Aqazadeh-Kho'i here on Thursday [28 December] announced agreement in principle with the setting up of joint companies for the exploration and exploitation of oil.

The two sides also discussed promotion of bilateral cooperation in the field of gas and oil.

Underlining expansion of oil cooperation, the two officials described as an essential step employment of the technical capabilities of both countries for upgrading mutual ties.

It was also announced in the meeting that in the near future a high-ranking Russian oil and gas delegation headed by the Russian oil and gas companies would visit Iran to follow up cooperation projects.

Initials 10-Year Accord

LD2912182195 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 2030 GMT 28 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The grounds for mutual cooperation between Iran and Russia over the next 10 years were determined in Tehran on Thursday [28 December]. According to a document initialed by the Russian deputy prime minister and foreign economic relations minister and the Islamic Republic of Iran's finance and economic affairs minister, in the next 10 years the two countries will cooperate in the fields of oil, energy, power stations, agriculture, dam construction, transport, and military issues.

The 10-year cooperation document will be signed at the next meeting of the Russian and Iranian presidents.

Mr. Morteza Mohammadkhan, our country's finance and economic affairs minister, in an interview with our correspondent, described the cooperation document as important and said: The document determines the two countries' strategic cooperation for the next 10 years in economic fields and the two countries have come to a full understanding with regard to Iran's debt repayments to Russia. He said: Iran and Russia have agreed to hold meetings every six months, instead of annually. The joint economic commission will be convening soon in Moscow.

The Iranian finance and economic affairs minister, elaborating on relations among the four countries of Iran, Russia, India, and China, said: Iran and Russia stress that peace and stability in Asia should be secured through good relations and political and economic understanding among those four countries.

Mr. Oleg Davydov, Russian deputy premier and foreign economic relations minister, also told our correspondent: The cooperation document has provided the necessary incentive for cooperation between the two countries. He added: We are trying to bring about friendly relations and proper coexistence between Iran and Russia.

At the end of Mr. Davydov's visit to Iran a joint statement was issued. In their statement, the two countries express their satisfaction over the growing trend of their relations and stress their willingness to strengthen their cooperation in all fields.

Calls Accord 'Beneficial'

LD2912202095 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1530 GMT 29 Dec 95

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] On Thursday 28 December the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Federative Republic of Russia, by signing of an agreement in Tehran, pictured grounds for economic cooperation for the next 10 years. Based on the document, Iran and Russia will boost cooperation on oil, energy, power plants, agriculture, dam construction, transportation, and military weapons for the 10 coming years.

After the collapse of former Soviet Union and the geopolitical changes in the region, the ties between Iran and Russia, as two powerful regional countries, assumed greater significance. In this regard Iran adopted an active diplomacy to promote political and economic cooperation with all countries of Commonwealth of Independent States, including Russia. Economic experts believe that enhancing cooperation between Iran and the Russian Federative Republic, considering the common stance of the two states on some regional issues — including exploiting the resources in the Caspian Sea — is very important from the point of view of bilateral, regional, and international relations. The expansion of the relations and implementation of joint economic plans can play a vital role in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Already Iran and Russia enjoy satisfactory cooperation on gas and oil, industry, research projects, technical and scientific fields, military and nuclear energy, as well as commercial affairs. Regarding the two countries'

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common interest to increase the volume of bilateral cooperation and execute joint oil, gas, and industry projects, Iran and Russia can upgrade their cooperation on economic, sea, land and air transportation, and also cultural and political areas to a much higher level. Presently Iran can be an essential link between the Middle East market and that of the CIS states. This will definitely be beneficial for the regional countries, including Russia.

All in all, the trip of the high-level economic and political delegations of Russia to Iran can be an incentive to strengthen the Tehran-Moscow ties also paving the grounds for more friendly relations among regional countries.

Comments on 'Strategic' Ties

LD0101143296 Tehran IRNA in English 1345 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 1, IRNA — Russian deputy prime minister, Oleg Davydov, has announced that relation of his country with Tehran is strategic and that Moscow is in no way wanting these relations to be marred.

The Russian deputy premier has said that Russia will not allow any country, implicitly referring to the US, to exercise influence in relations between Iran and Russia.

In his recent visit to Iran, Oleg Davydov reached agreement with Iranian officials on drafting trade and economic cooperation and implementation of joint projects by the two countries.

He said talks between the two countries' delegations in Tehran were "constructive", indicating the resolution of the two countries for preserving amicable relations based on mutual respect.

The good prospect of relations between Iran and Russia comes at a time when American officials have increased their pressures on Russia to decrease the level of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

U.S. Lifting of Serb Sanctions Said 'Gratitude'

LD3012135395 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The U.S. President Bill Clinton issued the order for lifting the economic sanctions against Belgrade on Friday December 29th. This measure by Clinton has taken place in a show of gratitude for the Serbs, keeping their obligation in implementing the Dayton peace accord.

According to political observers, the lifting of sanctions against Serbia by the U.S. under current circumstances is an encouragement for the Serbs, who have been evading the implementation of the Dayton peace accord and creating obstacles in the way of the peace process in Bosnia. Two weeks after the official and final signing of the Bosnian peace agreement and the deployment of the NATO force to that country, the Serbs have kept their war-readiness in Bosnia, especially around the city of Sarajevo.

Based on a report by the military officials of the so-called NATO peacekeeping forces, since the deployment of the NATO forces to Bosnia, the Serb marksmen have opened fire on the Bosnian Muslim citizens several times already. The extent of the Serb breaches of the agreement has been such that even the NATO war planes have not been immune form the Serb aggressions. So far the Serbs have fired missiles at two NATO fighter craft. Still the NATO has showed no political or military reaction against them yet.

The silence and irresponsible behavior of the NATO forces, who have supposedly been dispatched to Bosnia to overlook the implementation of the Dayton peace accord, is so outrageous that not only they do not prevent the flagrant violations of the peace agreement by the Serbs, but that the American General George Joulwan, in his meeting with the Serbian president Milosevic, announced that NATO forces will not track and arrest the Serb war criminals. What he actually meant was that he would not execute an important part of the Dayton accord. In the Dayton agreement the arrest and handing-in of Karadzic and Mladic, the two most important Serb criminals who have been indicted for crimes against humanity by the international war crimes tribunal at The Hague, is one of the most essential points to realize peace in Bosnia.

In any case, the coordinated backdown by the White House and the American military from their outlined duties is an indication of the American scheme to infiltrate the Serbian political ranks and strengthen their foothold in the Balkans. Although the American support for the NATO air strikes against the Serbs had angered the Serbian political circles in Serbia, the fact of the matter is that the Americans backed the Hawks' NATO air strikes against the Serbs only to protect their own interests, and to take the initiative into their own hands.

Commentary Faults U.S. 'Pressures' on Brazil

LD2112214095 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1530 GMT 21 Dec 95

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso on Wednesday December 20 de-

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scribed as inappropriate the pressures by American officials to finalize a billion dollar deal for an American firm. According to a German news agency, the comments are an explicit reference to the statements by the U.S. ambassador to Brazil, who said that if the American company of Raytheon does not win the tender of the Brazilian Government, the ties between the United States and Brazil will darken. This is of course not the first time that U.S. officials are trying to take advantage of their influence to impose big contracts or cancel the deals that are somehow against U.S. policies. U.S. officials are mainly linked to the power factions that supply them with their election expenses. In times of need these officials, overtly or covertly, play the role of dealers for these huge companies. That is why most American former presidents are now working as dealers for the big American companies; for example, Mr. Bush is now in charge of huge commercial companies. Last year Bill Clinton, in the sale of American jet fighters to Saudi Arabia, contacted the Saudi king personally to get the special privilege for the deal. Apparently during that deal, the British and French companies had a better chance to strike a deal, but with the mediation of Bill Clinton, the American company of Lockheed won the contract.

Now the Brazilian president is reluctant to allow U.S. influence on the economy of the country like that in Saudi Arabia. Such interference would question the national sovereignty of a country. Therefore the Brazilian officials seem to be taking sensitive tests on political matters. In case the American company of Raytheon wins the deal on the building of 17 radar stations to monitor the conditions prevailing over 5.2 million cubic [as heard] meters of Amazon jungle, the government of Brazil should face discontent. In that case, U.S. domination in that country will be unveiled.

The president of Brazil, when visiting Spain, in an interview with the Brazilian radio, said he is not willing to allow the U.S. ambassador to Rio to officially influence affairs in Brazil.

'Preventing Advancement of Islam' Said Dayton Goal

NC2712215395 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 13 Dec 95 p 1

[Political commentary: "Iran's Stands on the Dayton Accord and America's Efforts To Create Pessimism Toward Iranian-Bosnian Relations"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Some of the reasons and motives behind the Dayton accord stemmed from Europe's inabilities, while some had to do with America's global propaganda, and some with Clinton's personal propaganda efforts for domestic consumption and especially the upcoming presidential elections. However, there was also one other major motive behind this accord—preventing the advancement of political Islamism in the West. The oppression and pressures on the Bosnian Muslims had made the adoption of any step—although extreme—by Islamic tendencies look justifiable. And gradually the protraction of the war in the Balkans was making Bosnia a strong source for the propagation of political Islamism and struggle. This source, in addition to attracting Muslim combatants of any nationality, was also becoming a base for the export of revolution. And it was precisely on this basis that, in addition to pressuring the Bosnian negotiators to accept unjust conditions, the Clinton administration repeatedly told the Bosnian president to limit his relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

These demands were even made officially and overtly in the mass media. America's official circles expressed strong concern over the presence of non-Bosnian Muslim combatants who were stationed in parts of Bosnia to help their brothers in an unequal war. The Sarajevo government was even warned that if this situation was not stopped, the part of the agreement concerning guarantees assigned to the so-called American peace-keeping forces would not be implemented.

In this context, in its reports on the second session of the group in charge of mobilizing assistance from Islamic countries to Bosnia, which was held a few days ago with the participation of 13 Islamic countries in Tehran, the Western mass media tried to imply that Iran is trying to exploit the political conditions that have emerged from the Dayton accord to export arms and military materiel to Bosnia.

Most of the Western radios interpreted the Iranian foreign minister's remarks to the participants in the conference that "in order to create a balance of military power in the Balkans and to be sure of a lasting peace, it is necessary to help Bosnia" to mean that Iran is trying to convince the Muslim countries to extend exclusively military assistance to Bosnia. They assessed that such a move would be to the detriment of the peace agreement and of the Bosnian people. In the same context, one of the Western radios also stated, in its efforts to air its views, that "since Iran has strongly criticized the Dayton accord and has described it as a reward for the Serbs' aggressions, Iran's efforts to get closer to Bosnia could create problems for the Bosnian Government!"

These assessments of the Islamic Republic's stands are being made at a time when the criticisms by almost all the West's political and news circles on the unjust character of the Dayton agreement are far stronger than the

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criticisms that are being attributed to Iran. The difference is that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as it has stated in its official statements, considers the implementation of and the guarantees for the implementation of the Dayton agreement—despite all its weaknesses—to be necessary and, as admitted by Iran's permanent UN representative, it has emphasized the acceptance of the Dayton agreement in view of the world conditions and criticisms. [sentence as published]

All this shows the sensitivities of Western political officials, especially of America, on issues that have almost nothing to do with the main problem in the Balkans; and this, in itself, shows that the supporters of this plan are seeking other objectives under the aegis of peace.

Daily on Russia's 'Unjust' Policy Toward Chechnya

LD1712132295 Tehran IRNA in English 1307 GMT 17 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 17, IRNA — A morning daily commenting on Russia's unjust policy towards Chechnya, said the Russian-organized elections there will harm the prospects for any peaceful settlement of Chechen crisis.

The English-language daily 'KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL' in its editorial on Sunday wrote, "The Russian-organized local elections in Chechnya, where separatists under Dzhokhar Dudayev's command, staged a four-year war of independence, will largely contribute to the deterioration of the prospects for any peaceful settlement."

It went on to say, "Russian President Boris Yeltsin despite all-out efforts, chose to send his army to the wounded republic at a most inappropriate time to crush the popular independent movement."

The paper added, "While some top Yeltsin advisers adopted a tough line on dealing with one of the most critical developments since the former Soviet Union fell apart, the fact remains that the Chechen crisis brought about a series of ramifications as far as the whole political spectrum in Moscow is concerned."

"Seemingly, Russian politicians, who, apparently paid no need to their ineffective and failed performance in Chechnya, once again contributed to the complexity of the crisis by holding elections that the international bodies like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) dismissed because of the lack of proper security conditions necessary for normal polling," the daily continued.

The paper also said, "It is an established fact that the outcome of the polls, which the separatist fighters have already condemned as a farce designed to legitimize the Russian-installed interim leader, Doku Zavgayev, will not help end the four-year-old bloody confrontations."

It added, "At present the human suffering of the Chechens, coupled with reported atrocities by Russian soldiers, has left the entire population in the most tragic conditions."

"There is no doubt that the situation in the war-torn republic seems to be approaching a point of no return and the political leadership in Moscow should think twice before embarking on a new platform that could renew old experiences," the daily pointed out.

It continued, "Impartial political observers say, under the present political climate, the chance that any Moscow-backed government can put an end to the people's campaign for independence is highly unlikely and the results, irrespective of the election outcome, cannot provide any kind of legitimacy to the presidential incumbent in this tiny republic."

"Given the historical background of the Chechen people's struggle for political independence, the Russians, particularly in the period following the dismantling of the USSR, have been unable to handle the crisis without suffering huge losses in the political, economic and military scenes," the daily emphasized.

"The Chechen quagmire in which the Russians have fallen, is too complicated and no Moscow-backed government can overcome it. And reports of renewed clashes once again highlight the vulnerability of the peace agreement already reached by the warring parties," the editorial concluded.

Paper on Country's Stance on Russian Elections

LD1912152695 Tehran IRNA in English 1315 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 19, IRNA — A morning daily commenting on the outcome of the recent Russian parliamentary elections, said that the result should be considered as a strong warning for the West.

The English-language daily 'IRAN NEWS' in its editorial on Tuesday wrote that even though final results of Russian parliamentary elections have not yet been released, the preliminary returns speak of the unexpected victory of the Communists.

The Communist Party headed by Gennadiy Zyuganov, the Liberal Democratic Party led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Viktor Chernomyrdin's Our Home Is Russia, and the Yabloko bloc led by Grigoriy Yavlinskiy have

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gained the required number of votes to occupy seats in the Russian parliament.

The paper also said, "even though the present Russian Constitution presents the government system as a republic rather than a parliamentary rule, it would be a gross mistake for a political analyst to slight the recent parliamentary elections."

It added, "this is especially true as there is only a year left to the upcoming Russian presidential elections which is slated for June."

Opinion polls in recent days indicate that Communists have gained greater popularity. But the victory of the extremist right-wing Liberal Democratic Party has been highly unexpected.

The paper continued, "evidently, the Russian people have a preference to vote for extremist left and right wings rather than for conservative reformists. And even now many question why this is so?"

It added, "seasoned analysts of Russian developments present two major answers: First, culturally speaking, the Russian people have from the past been extremists in their acts, deeds, and votes. They prefer black and white to gray. The proof to this claim is the merry nights of Saint Petersburg pitted against the pious worship of people in the Orthodox churches in the czarist era.

"Second, the centrist reformists have not had a positive performance in recent years and have shown excessive flexibility toward the West. The Russian people meanwhile have not reaped any benefits from initial promises given by the West in return for what they have offered."

The daily also said, "but to get to Iran's stance. Iran follows Russia's parliamentary elections with special sensitivity, as Russia is its biggest and most important neighbor."

"Surely Iran will not be pleased with the coming into power of the extremist left and/or right wing for ideological reasons and for some of their ambitious policies to restore the former Soviet Union," the paper emphasized.

It added, "but what pacifies Iran in regard to the victory of these groups is their resistance vis-a-vis the invasive Western policies against regional countries."

"Tehran has always expressed concern over the submissiveness of the centrists vis-a-vis the colonial policies of the West and in particular the U.S.," the editorial concluded.

Papers Welcome Results of Turkish Elections

LD2712111095 Tehran IRNA in English 1011 GMT 27 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 27, IRNA — The two Tehran- based English-language dailies, 'KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL' and 'TEHRAN TIMES' in their editorials Wednesday focused on the Welfare Party's victory in the Parliamentary elections in Turkey.

KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL assessed the outcome of the elections from a historical perspective while TEHRAN TIMES analysed it from political point of view.

According to the KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL, the modern Turkish state has been built on the ruins of the Ottoman empire, once the center of the Islamic world. Under the Ottomans the leadership of Muslims was entrusted upon the successive caliphs who rulled over almost the entire Arab world and a great part of the central Europe.

The daily criticized Western powers for their relentless efforts to encourage the assorted Turkish leaders to adopt an inflexible and tough stance against the collective issue of Islamic principles in spite of the popular sentiment.

"Not surprisingly and irrespective of the planned changes in the activity of the Turkish culture of governance its people largely remained Muslim."

The editorial praised the Welfare Party's victory, "the vote for Refah, among other things, established that despite overt enemy propaganda and non-stop conspiracies to eradicate Turkey's Islamic thought and culture, and the reality that the country's secularist forces literally spared no-effort to forge deeper interaction between Turkey and the West, the people's religious indentity and direction has remained intact."

On the same subject TEHRAN TIMES referring to 158 seats won by the Welfare Party in the 550-member Turkish parliament, wrote that traditionally the Turkish president appoints the leader of the party with most seats in parliament as prime minister, so, now it is Erbakan's right to move to form government.

Turkey is a Muslim country and Turkish people, fed up with the Western influences, now have voted for an Islamic party to form government. But it seems that outgoing Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, leader of the True Path party and Mesut Yilmaz, head of the Motherland party are trying to form a kind of coalition in order to sideline the Welfare pary, added TEHRAN TIMES.

If this happens, this would be a "stark disrespect" to the people's vote.

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The daily warned, "under the circumstances, the Welfare party may by forced to resort to other means, than peaceful ones, to vindicate its rights. if this happens, only those who have created this situation will be to blame."

The daily in conclusion advised the Turkish political parties to avoid following sectarian interests at the cost of national interests, otherwise, they may prepare the ground for internal strife.

Differences Among GCC Members Discussed

NC2812112595 Tehran ETTELA'AT in Persian 12 Dec 95 p 2

[Commentary by R. Koveytipur: "The Noncooperation Council!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Qatari amir's exit from the final session of the 16th Persian Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] session in protest at Saudi Arabia's show of power at the Council has revealed the crisis in relations among GCC member countries. We had seen differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar in the form of border skirmishes that led to the deaths of several soldiers. But we had never seen such differences at a summit.

The GCC was formed to create comprehensive cooperation, especially in the defense and security fields. But during its short life and in its various meetings and sessions, its statements have always spoken of accord in the views of members—of course, only on paper, since it has never been able to prove this in its deeds. The experience of Saddam's attempt against Kuwait and the full occupation of that country and the threat of occupying Saudi Arabia too revealed the true extent of cooperation in the Council and showed it lacked the strength to resist or at least display a show of strength against Iraq's tired forces.

The events of recent years and a look at what the GCC can do reveal that this Council was set up as a maneuver by paper tigers. The GCC member countries do not even have the strength to contain the discontent of their own people at home, let alone stand up to aggressive foreign powers.

The Qatari amir's attempt was expected from the moment the Council was created. But some considerations stemming from what foreigners instilled in the Arab countries prevented such differences from surfacing. But these differences are surfacing, like embers from beneath the ashes. Qatar's new policy under the new amir is considered to be a development among the southern Persian Gulf littoral countries.

Does this development speak of a deep rift among the group of countries that apparently disagree among themselves? The Qataris have decisively shown that they will no longer tolerate the Saudis' monopolistic attitude and have declared a policy of "breaching the silence." This stance is being declared in parallel with the crisis in the rule and succession in Riyadh following Fahd's illness. In view of all this we should expect new developments in the southern part of the Persian Gulf. The Qatari amir's attempt followed by remarks by the Qatari foreign minister on not accepting the Saudi al-Hujaylan as the GCC secretary general and Qatar's not attending the sessions he attends all show Qatar's new initiative. Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jasim's emphasis that the GCC should choose between Qatar or the Saudi al-Hujaylan plunges the other members of the Council into a crisis and will ultimately make them impose their views too.

In the same way that Qatar's policies on confronting Iraq overtly disagree with the policies of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the other members have their own independent views and will state them. The policy of "breaching the silence" that Qatar has begun will be followed by moves by the other member countries.

Qatar's policy is laudable in that as well as not following the Saudis, it is no longer prepared to tolerate the Council's statements, most of which are aimed at hiding the domestic and foreign problems of the member countries. These are statements that—according to the Qatari foreign minister—are issued pompously and are not protected by sanctions, statements that are baseless and unrealistic and tend to worsen the mischief in the area. Such statements were also issued at the last session, of course without the presence of Qatar. At the same time as Qatar's absence, another difference was also revealed—Bahrain's territorial claims against Qatar.

Speaker's Call for Participation in Elections Noted

NC2812120995 Tehran SALAM in Persian 13 Dec 95 p 2

[Political commentary: "Political Modesty"]

[FBIS Translated Text] We heard in the news yesterday that, speaking on behalf the majority in the Majles, the esteemed Majles speaker modestly called on all the groups to participate in the elections in order to safeguard the revolution. This statement can be viewed from two angles:

First, this statement can be regarded as a positive sign of how the majority interprets the issue of participation. From the other angle, one can regard it as a pro forma

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remark for appearances sake. However, in order to decide which one applies it is necessary to take note of some things and to postpone drawing one's final conclusion until the coming days or weeks.

1. Generally speaking, each political group has its specific goals and political behavior. Political behavior means acts that concern "power" or the object of which is to acquire or influence power. Therefore, if a group is political in nature, it is most natural for it to participate in elections, especially since election time is when verdicts are passed on all the political efforts and performances during and after a specific term; and no political group is prepared to carry out political activities and then to withdraw when the time comes for the payoff.

Nevertheless, a political group might not participate in one phase of the elections for certain reasons. And naturally it should have reasons for not participating.

2. Some may think that groups decide not to participate out of fear that they might in fact not get any votes, or in other words, because they fear rejection by the voters. Apparently this is not correct because in that case standing down could solve none of their problems and definitely would lead to their further weakness. On the other hand, any group, no matter how weak, tries to gain at least one seat in parliament so that it can thus use its deputy to propagate its views and also get a protective umbrella for the group.

3. Nonparticipation may be based on specific reasons. Some may not accept the principles and the legitimacy of their system, in which case it is meaningless for them to become involved in political campaigning inside the system; and their campaigning takes on a completely different character and falls outside the framework of the system.

Others may accept the legitimacy of their system and naturally consider themselves to be duty bound to work within the legal framework. But because of various legal and illegal pressures on them from the ruling bodies, they consider that to participate would be tantamount to endorsing these punishments. Thus, they consider dropping out to be their best choice, especially if they do not intend to wage a strong propaganda campaign against the pressures because they consider this not to be expedient for society.

4. With these things in mind, the question is: Who is the esteemed Majles speaker addressing? If there is a political group that has no intention of participating, asking such a group—which is not carrying out its main duty—to participate is useless. And if there is a group which has taken such a stand contrary to its own wishes or because it has been forced to, instead of issuing humble requests for it to participate, we should seek the reasons for its decision not to participate. If the reasons are found to be just, then they should be accepted and things should be set right. If they are found to be unjust, they should be categorically rejected and society and the people allowed to pass final judgment. For moral reasons, individual behavior, and human relations, legitimate requests—at least modest requests—are good and useful but it is unclear how effective they are in politics. But if they are effective, then everyone who disagreed with the policies that were applied during the fourth term elections mutually can say: The officials in charge are respectfully asked to make it possible for everyone to participate in the elections in order to safeguard the revolution. They are requested not only not to repeat what was done during the fourth term, but also to apologize to all those who were wronged at that time.

Paper Views Press Role in Upcoming Elections

NC2612123195 Tehran HAMSHAHRI in Persian 14 Dec 95 p 1

[Editorial: "The Press and the Principle of Relying on the People's Vote"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The best known method to ensure the people's constructive and fundamental participation in managing affairs in the world today is elections, especially elections for the legislative branch. But since parliamentary elections usually take place only every four years in our country, when the people's participation is manifested, the sensitivities of all the influential forces, and especially the press, become vitally significant.

If the press does not begin discussions and informative reports on the issues at a logical time before the elections, it will actually be harming the rights of the public as far as their political participation is concerned. The press not only reflects the people's views and thoughts, it can also affect their views and help crystallize and clarify their thoughts.

Moreover, the press's just approach toward political groups and factions that believe in the system and in the principle of political competition in elections is among the points that should be emphasized. Actually, sooner or later we should learn to resort to interviews and expressions of views and ideas and the principle of coexistence and healthy competition instead of cultivating a spirit of mutual destructiveness.

One of the other missions of the press is to strengthen an atmosphere in which the Iranian nation will be

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able to mature to such an extent that it will be able to tell right from wrong in the disturbed world of today and to vote for the people it trusts. Therefore, the press is actually the mouthpiece of the people's views; and the better it operates, the better and more correctly it will have performed its duties. And whoever is incapable of sincerely believing in the just judgment of a long-suffering and mature people is not worthy of representing the people.

All these call for the need to resort to correct propaganda and publicity methods during the election campaign, the need to avoid spreading political poison against one faction or another, and the need to propagate the principle of relying on the people's vote— whatever it may be. Observing, promulgating, and encouraging the principle of peaceful coexistence of political thought and efficient elections also manifest the political maturity of nations—from the people, the press, and the factions.

The opportune move by the esteemed president of appointing independent observers to monitor the Majles elections shows he is aware of the sensitivities of the elections, and also manifests his determination that these elections be held in as healthy an atmosphere as possible. Meanwhile, this is a clear sign for all those forces which have, until now, been wavering on whether they should participate in the elections—either as candidates or as voters—or not. Everything is ready for the elections—the most sensitive in the life of the Islamic Republic—to be held in a healthy atmosphere. And the participation of the people and the political forces—as vastly as possible—will prepare the grounds for our dear homeland's powerful entry into the third millennium in the Christian calendar. God willing that this will be so!

Haftgel Imam Details Provincial Problems

NC1612095495 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 12 Dec 95 p 4

[IRNA report from Haftgel]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In an interview with IRNA, the Haftgel Friday Imam Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin Mohammad Sharifi explained the problems in the Haftgel district and the activities that have been carried out. [passage omitted]

Regarding problems facing Haftgel district, the Friday imam elaborated: Haftgel is a deprived area devoid of the most basic welfare services. It has not yet been given necessary attention by officials despite having abundant natural resources such as oil, gas, limestone, ores, and various other resources which remain untapped. Despite repeated written requests to officials, the area is deprived of purified gas and the people are forced to use unrefined toxic gas which has resulted in the spread of dangerous respiratory problems and caused damage from emissions.

He continued: Haftgel has only one clinic, no dentist, and its maternity clinic was inaugurated even though it does not have all facilities and is incomplete. Some of its departments are closed for unknown reasons or are operated on a limited basis. There is a shortage of official departments such as the official statistics, marriage, and property registration office, law courts, and even recreational centers for sports, parks, paved roads, zebra crossings, theaters, swimming pools and so on. Dilapidated houses, which are under the control of the armed forces without any supervision by the municipality or experts, are sold to people. Most of the houses remained since the time when the oil company located here in the township of Naft-e Sefid was demolished by the armed forces. The roads which link Haftgel to Masjed-e Soleyman cannot be used as they are in a state of disrepair and there is no sign of construction along the winding Ahvaz route, which is 25 kilometers in length.

He added: The cement factories in Haftgel are used mostly to the benefit of Ramhormoz. From the point of view of the demarcation of the country's provinces and electoral constituencies, Haftgel is considered part of Masjed-e Soleyman, which constitutes the most important political problem of this area and despite dispatching scrolls [of signatures] this problem has not been resolved. We have 200 students enrolled in the Open University, but this area does not have any educational facilities or even a single university and there are many other similar problems. We hope that with the Grace of God, and the efforts of our officials these problems will be eliminated. However, due to the efforts of the esteemed Khuzestan Friday imam and the local officials, a gas refinery has been promised by the petroleum minister for 1375 [year beginning 21 March 1996] and the Endowments office has allocated more than 6.5 million rials for the repair of mosques, and a damaged gas pipeline has been repaired with the cooperation of the municipality. [passage omitted]

In conclusion, the Haftgel Friday imam called on the people to participate actively and also mentioned the problems that the office of the Vali-ye Faqih [supreme jurisconsult] is facing which include lack of transport means, suitable housing, meeting halls, an enclosure around the prayer grounds, and paucity of funds for the deprived, needy, and impoverished people of the area.

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Pakistan

Nuclear Facility List Swap With Ind... ported

BK0201051296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 2 Jan 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan and India have exchanged lists of each other's nuclear installations and facilities as part of a broad framework of confidence-building measures agreed upon by the two countries. The countries exchanged their relevant documents through diplomatic channels simultaneously in New Delhi and Islamabad for the fifth consecutive year. The agreement on the prohibition of attack against each other's nuclear installations was signed in December 1988. Under the agreement, the two countries are to keep each other informed on the nuclear installations on 1 January each year.

Extension of Service for Nuclear Scientist Ordered

BK0201065096 Rawalpindi JANG in Urdu 2 Jan 96 p 10

[Editorial: "Extension in Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan's Tenure of Service"]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari ordered an extension of three years service to renowned Pakistani nuclear scientist, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan. Dr. Qadeer Khan's name will always be remembered for the progress made in the field of nuclear technology by the first Muslim country in the world. Reports about his retirement caused concern among national circles over the past few weeks. Recently India honored its Muslim nuclear scientist Dr. Abdul Kalam by granting him a post for life. Similarly, in recognition of his valuable services, we should also abolish the concept of retirement for this great national hero. In fact the nation wishes to hear this kind of news. However, by announcing a three-year extension, the president provided some relief to perturbed national circles. This expectation is not inappropriate because if India can decide to keep its Muslim scientist for life, then in Pakistan Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan also deserves this honor.

Ali Criticizes U.S. Covert Decision on Iran

BK3112134595 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 31 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Senate was informed today that any interference in the internal affairs of Iran will be a source of great concern for the government and people of Pakistan.

Speaking on a point of order regarding report of U.S. covert operation against Iran, Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali said such an operation would be a blatant interference in the affairs of a sovereign country and would negate the basic principles of interstate relations. He said as a global power, the United States has special responsibility to join other nations for peace and security in the region, but these reports are contrary to it. He said we hope that no such action will be taken.

The foreign minister said Pakistan enjoys good relations with the United States and Iran and is available to use its good offices to remove misunderstandings between the two countries.

Report on Asif Remarks on U.S.-Iran Issue

BK0101124896 Islamabad THE NATION in English 1 Jan 96 p 1,13

[Report by Imran Munir]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Islamabad—Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali told the Senate on Sunday that the government and people of Pakistan have serious concern over the American proposed covert operation against Iran.

Responding to point of orders from various Senators, the Foreign Minister said Pakistan has concern over the new development because it has strong cultural, religious and brotherly ties with Iran. He said there were reports appearing in the Press that the United States had allocated 20 million dollars for launching a covert operation against Iran, adding, "If these news items are correct then any action in this regard would mean not only a direct interference in the solidarity and freedom of another country but also a violation of the international laws and human rights principles".

Sardar Asif noted that now America is a global power and it should work with other countries to establish peace in the world, adding, "Being a power it is her duty to ensure peace in the world".

He expressed the hope that America would not take any such action against Iran, adding, "We wish that both the countries resolve their differences through peaceful negotiations".

Earlier, raising the issue on a point of order, Senator Allama Hadi of Tehrik-i-Jafria Pakistan said after the removal of the puppet American government of Shah Iran. America is persistently hatching conspiracies against Iran. He said America wanted to harm the Islamic government of Iran through various tactics, adding, "Not only this America also wants to destabilise Pakistan government.

Tracing a real motive behind the American plan Hadi said Islamic countries and religious [word indistinct]

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are the real target of America. He said it is duty of the Pakistan government not to be a mum on this development and condemn the nefarious plans because "Iran is at the movement fighting the cause of Islamic world".

Hadi demanded the chair to pass a resolution of condemnation against the American covert operation against Iran.

Joining the sentiments of Allama Hadi, Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi condemned the American action saying, "Any action against Iran means an action against the entire Muslim world."

Senator Khurshid Ahmad said that America had allocated a special budget to destabilise the government of Iran, adding, "It is very important to raise a voice against America otherwise any delay in this regard world allow the American to implement their design."

APP adds: Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali Sunday expressed concern in the Senate over the reported budgetary allocation of 20 million by the US administration to destabilise the Iranian government.

Such covert action would be a blatant interfere into the internal affairs of a sovereign state and negate the basic principles of inter-state conduct," Asif said in response to point of orders raised by Allama Syed Jawad and supported by Professor Khursheed Ahmed.

They said it is a matter of grave concern that Iran is being made a target due to its Islamic revolutionary policies adding Iran is playing a role of safeguarding the Muslim Ummah's interests.

Sardar Asif said, "Any such move against Iran will be a source of great concern for the government and people of Pakistan because it enjoys close ties with the United States.

Foreign Minister said being a sole Superpower, the United States has a responsibility to join other nations for regional peace and stability. These reports are contradictory to it. We hope no such action would be taken.

He said Pakistan is scrupulously following the policy of non- interference in the internal affairs of other countries and it expects others to adhere to the same principle.

Asif said 20 billion dollars are earmarked for the CIA out of which reportedly 20 million have been set aside for "destabilising Muslim government of Iran."

He said Pakistan is in constant touch with the Iranian government over the issue and Foreign Minister Dr Velayati has already written to UN Secretary General. He said, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has also already expressed his government's concern.

Continuing acrimonious exchanges between the US and Iran an important power in the region are not conducive to maintenance of peace and stability.

Pakistan would continue to urge for resolution of difference through peaceful means and is ready to use its good offices in this direction," Asif added. [passage omitted]

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali on Sunday said Kashmir issue will be an integral part of Pakistan's foreign policy during the year 1996 and the government will do its best to project it effectively at the international level.

Delineating the salient features of Pakistan's foreign policy during 1996 at a Press talk in the Parliament House, he said, the government would also expose India's aggressive designs explicitly spelled out by its planned nuclear tests, arms race and missile programme.

Thirdly, he said, Pakistan would further cement its ties with neighbours China and Iran, Islamic and Arab countries and Central Asian states.

Fourthly, Sardar Asif said, Pakistan would use all its resources for the establishment of lasting peace in Afghanistan.

He said, the year 1995 was a story of achievements in Pakistan's foreign policy.

"The successful foreign policy elevated the prestige of the country — the passage of Brown Amendment was not the only success achieved in 1995 — the Kashmir issue also gained international prominence and Pakistan made its best efforts for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan."

The Foreign Minister said, Pakistan would not recognise Israel until peace is completely materialised in Palestine and the Middle East.

He said, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has officially communicated to Pakistan not to recognize Israel at present.

The Foreign Minister said, the trade relations with India will not allow it to have an upper hand over Pakistan.

He said, Pakistan and Iran are making concerted efforts to bring about peace in Afghanistan.

Sardar Asif said, India is involved in Afghanistan's internal strife and until India stops its interference the fighting will not come to an end.

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He said, the fighting factions in Afghanistan should realise that they cannot raze out each other completely and hence they should look for a negotiated solution.

The foreign Minister said, Pakistan did not react strongly to the burning of its embassy in Kabul.

Replying to a question he said, both Iran and Pakistan want peace in Afghanistan. "As for our intentions they are the same, however there can be a difference of approach. During a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister in Paris, we shared our objective of peace in Afghanistan."

Sardar Asif said, India is responsible for infighting in Afghanistan. "It is in Indian interest that the infighting continues in Afghanistan — if India stops interference today there can be peace in Afghanistan tomorrow."

The Foreign Minister said, we would not let the people of Afghanistan face a famine-like situation and we will continue to supply food and medicine to them.

"But we will not send military equipment and petroleum products to Afghanistan as they could inflame infighting in the country."

Responding to a question Sardar Asif said, an end to smuggling on Afghan border will result in an increase in Pakistan's revenue.

"Previously we received 200 arab (20 billion) rupees tax and this year we received 260 Arab (26 billion) rupees tax."

Answering to another question he said, Pakistan is a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) so it will have to abide by its rules and if Pakistan gives up WTO membership, it will not get trade concessions anywhere in the world.

Sardar Asif said, the government would not allow India to damage Pakistan industry.

"And nor the trade with India means Indian domination over Pakistan — this will never happen," he said.

He said, trade with India will be based on two principles complimentarity which means balance of trade; and no competition in trade as we would defend each other's trade interests.

Sardar Asif said, the expulsion of illegally living Arab nationals from Pakistan is a right decision.

The Foreign Minister said he had suggested in the Nawaz Sharif era that the Afghan jehad had come to an end therefore those coming for jehad be returned to their respective countries because the Arabs were not happy with us on that.

"If Nawaz Sharif had accepted my suggestion there would have been no explosions in the country today."

He said, our policy of not recognising Israel is clear.

U.S. Criticism of Bhutto Reportedly 'Emboldened' MQM

BK0101064596 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 20 Dec 95 p 9

[Report by Diplomatic Editor]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] New Delhi, Dec. 19 — The U.S. criticism of the Benazir Bhutto government's handling of the situation in Sindh province has emboldened the Muhajir Qaumi Movement [MQM] to issue another appeal to the international community to prevent genocide of the Muhajirs and end the reign of terror let loose upon the party's rank and file.

Despite the Brown Amendment, relations between the United States and Pakistan are somewhat tense due to Ms. Bhutto's failure to curb terrorism and fundamentalism in her country and the grave law and order situation in Sindh, which has crippled Pakistan's economy.

Apart from Washington's public expression of concern over the law and order and human rights situation in Sindh, the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi is reported to have lodged a protest against the arrest of a consulate employee, Syed Ali Naqvi and his son, by Rangers after blindfolding them. Several U.S. diplomats in Pakistan have been assassinated in recent months.

U.S. officials including Assistant Secretary, Ms. Robin Raphel, have shown sympathy towards the oppressed Muhajirs and urged Islamabad to negotiate sincerely with them. The MQM has held Ms. Bhutto responsible for the breakdown of negotiations and alleged that her government had resorted to state terror instead of talking to resolve the dangerous situation.

To prove its point the MQM has just released the entire correspondence it had with the government negotiating team led by Mr. N.D. Khan and has sent copies of it to various governments, as well as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The MQM feels that the talks would be useful only when their basic demands are conceded. Opposition leader, Mr. Nawaz Sharif too has refused to hold talks with Ms. Bhutto unless mid-term elections are held immediately.

The MQM has told the government negotiators that it had agreed to re-start negotiations in spite of Ms. Bhutto having called the Muhajir nation as "rats", in one of her speeches. "We believed, that by tolerating such racial insults and by participating in these talks, we were not jeopardising the chances of realisation of peace in the

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areas where 22 million Muhajirs live. But, we have now realised that your government's decision to initiate this dialogue was essentially a subterfuge designed to mislead domestic and international public opinion."

The Muhajirs would continue to assert their constitutional and lawful right to protest, both in Pakistan and abroad, until such time as their guaranteed rights by the laws of Pakistan and the norms of international law were realised. It was necessary for the resumption of talks that extrajudicial killings and other form of brutalities of the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] government against the Muhajir nation be immediately stopped, says Ajmal Dehlvi, leader of the MQM negotiating team.

He has pointed out that the European Parliament also had condemned violation of human rights in Sindh by the Bhutto government. Mr. Riaz Khan, Pakistan's ambassador to the European Community had, in an open discussion with members of the European Parliament, admitted that government agencies were also involved in the killings in Karachi. The former Chief Minister of NWFP [North-West Frontier Province], Mr. Sabir Shah had disclosed on the floor of the Provincial Assembly that Interior Minister Nasirullah Khan Babar and Frontier Chief Minister Sharpao were heavily involved in acquiring dangerous weapons for transportation to criminals in Karachi and the rest of Sindh, to be used against the MQM and Pashtoon supporters of the NAP [National Awami Party].

The Muhajir people were facing the "worst brutalities" at the hands of the government. The cruelty of the administration had infused a spirit of determination in the people that until they got their due constitutional and internationally recognised human rights, their struggle must continue. The People's Party of Ms. Bhutto had absolutely no constituent base or political mandate to remain in power in southern Pakistan and the Sindh province. "Your brutal tactics can only delay the inevitable. Sooner or later, when people's franchise is restored, the MQM will decisively emerge victorious." "Your government's present action, therefore, reflects the paranoia that the PPP feels at the prospect of losing its political fortunes forever once our people are allowed to vote freely," says the MQM leader.

Minister Views 'Successes' of Foreign Policy

BK0101042396 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The foreign minister, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, says Pakistan achieved remarkable successes during 1995 and it will continue striving to achieve its foreign policy goals. He said this at a press talk in Islamabad yesterday. He said the successful foreign policy of the present government has elevated the prestige of the country. It was due to Pakistan's effective foreign policy that Brown Amendment was passed by the U.S. Congress and the Kashmir issue gained international prominence. The foreign minister said the Kashmir issue will remain an integral part of Pakistan's foreign policy, and the government would do its best to secure right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people.

Referring to other foreign policy areas, he said Pakistan will further cement its ties with Muslim countries, specially Arab and Central Asian states. It would further promote its relations with China and Iran. On Afghanistan, he said Pakistan would use all its resources for the establishment of lasting peace in Afghanistan. He said India is involved in Afghanistan's internal strife and until India stops its interference, the fighting will not come to an end. He appreciated Iran's efforts to bring about peace in Afghanistan.

On the question of trade relations with India, the foreign minister said Pakistan will not allow India to have upper hand over Pakistan. The trade between the two countries, he said should be of equal benefit to both of them.

The foreign minister also made it clear that Pakistan would not recognize Israel until peace is completely materialized in Palestine and the rest of Middle East. He said the Palestine Liberation Organization has officially communicated to Pakistan not to recognize Israel at present.

Four Peshawar Blast Suspects Arrested

BK0201070996 Islamabad THE NATION in English 2 Jan 96 p 1

[Unattributed article]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Murree (NNI) - The Murree police on Monday arrested the alleged suspect of the Peshawar blast along with three accomplices from the Mall Road here on Monday.

According to reports, the persons were arrested on the pointation of the NWFP [North-West Frontier Province] police.

One of the four persons arrested reportedly has a striking resemblance to the sketch of the main suspect of the blast released by the NWFP police. The reports added that the four suspects have been handed over to the NWFP police.

The Inspector-General of Police NWFP Syed Masood Shah had told reporters in a Press conference that the

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car which was used in the Peshawar explosion and the terrorists involved were identified.

He appealed to the people to inform the police about the person whose name according to car sale documents, was A. Mateen. The car was purchased from a bargain agent on the University Road, Peshawar on December 20 by a Persian-speaking person.

Government had also increased the reward money for the informer to Rs [rupees] 10 million.

Suspect in Egyptian Embassy Bombing Still at Large

BK0201070096 Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 2 Jan 96 pp 1, 4

[Article by Mohammad Suhail Gul: "Prime Suspect of Embassy Blast Still at Large"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, Jan 1 — A Palestinian student Majid Azzam who is considered to be the prime suspect of the bombing at Egyptian Embassy is still at large since 5th December when FIA [Federal Investigation Agency] had raided his flat in Lahore.

According to the Arab sources, Majid Azzam student of M Phil Chemistry [as published] in Punjab University had come to Pakistan on Egyptian travel documents issued to the Palestinian refugees. According to the Palestinian students of the same university, who are in the custody of FIA, the accused was spotted on December 4, in Lahore. On December 5, FIA raided his flat but he was missing, the FIA authorities arrested other six Palestinian students living nearby.

The members of the Egyptian investigation team believe that Majid Azzam may be the prime suspect of the bomb blast at Egyptian Embassy as he was the student of chemistry and had received his bachelor's degree from Sudan University where possibly he had come across the activists of Al-Jehad group.

Earlier on the request of the Egyptian investigators the FIA had launched a massive hunt for the Arabs living in Pakistan among the arrested Arabs were Hamza Azzam and Huthaifa Azzam the Pakistani nationals and sons of late Professor Abdullah Azzam. They were arrested for being Palestinian and having relationship with Majid Azzam but they were released later after learning that Majid Azzam belonged to Gaza Strip whereas the late Abdullah Azzam was from West Bank.

Trial of Officers Involved in Coup Attempt Begins

BK0101044496 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The trial of the four Army officers involved in an alleged coup attempt began yesterday at Army Court. Official sources told APP that the charges against accused officers have been framed under relevant sections of the Pakistan Army Act and the Pakistan Penal Code. The charges were framed against the accused in the light of the summary of evidence and the pre-trial evidence by the Judge Advocate General's Department in the GHQ [General Headquarters]. The accused officers were arrested in September last year.

Further on Trial

BK0101082096 Islamabad THE NATION in English 1 Jan 96 pp 1, 13

[APP report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad—The Field General Court Martial (FGCM) of the Pakistan Army met here Sunday in camera to try the four army officers involved in an alleged coup attempt.

Official sources told APP that the charges against the accused officers have been framed under Pakistan Army Act Section 55, 59 read with Section 121-A of PPC [Pakistan Penal Code] and Section 31 (D).

These sections deal with conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, conspiring to wage war against Pakistan and attempting to seduce any person from his allegiance to the government of Pakistan.

The President of the Field General Court Martial is Maj-Gen Zahid Ehsan and comprises Brigadier Javed Ahmad Khan, Brigadier Sayeed Ahmad Khan, Colonel Shahid Niaz and Col Sharif.

The charges were framed against the accused, in the light of the summary of evidence and the pre-trial advice by the Judge Advocate General's Department in the General Headquarters.

The were charge-sheeted on Dec 21 and are being given full opportunity to engage defence council (Civil) of their own choice. They were arrested in September 1995 and include Maj. Gen Zaheerul Islam Abbas, Brig Mustansar Billa, Col Mohammad Azad Minhas and Colonel Inyat Ullah Khan.

NNI adds: The Field General Court Marshal (FGCM) adjourned hearing on the case of four military officers

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Major General Zaheerul Islam Abbasi, Brigadier Mustansar Billah, Colonel Inayatullah and Colonel Azad Minhas till January 10 on the request of the officers.

The officers citing shortage of time requested the court to grant them a time frame for consultation to their counsels to prepare their case.

The court accepting their plea gave them a period until January 10 to consult with their counsels and their relations, and prepared their case accordingly.

Police Kill 3 'Terrorists' in Karachi

BK3012090095 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] According to APP, two notorious terrorists — Meraj alias Abbas and Salim Dhagga — have been killed in an encounter with police in Karachi. Both were wanted by police in about 40 cases of murders, attempt to murder, and terrorism. A Kalashnikov and a TT pistol were recovered from their possession.

In another encounter with the Rangers, another terrorist, Mohammad Arshad Qureshi alias Imran, were killed in Joharabad area yesterday.

Ten People Killed in Different Incidents in Karachi

BK0101150796 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1400 GMT 1 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Ten persons were killed in different incidents of violence in Karachi today. Police sources say four people of a same family were killed in Korangi area by unknown persons early this morning. Six people were killed in Liaqatabad, Saudabad, and Sharifabad areas.

Altaf Group 'Terrorist' Killed in Karachi

BK0201060096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] According to police, an Altaf Group terrorist, Salman, was killed during an encounter with police, while his unidentified accomplice managed to escape in the Kharibabad area of Karachi last night. A TT pistol, two magazines, and 13 live rounds were recovered from the accused. Meanwhile, police sources said it was later identified that the deceased was a member of Nayim Sheri terrorist group allegedly responsible for the killing of two captains yesterday.

Interior, Law Ministers Comment on Karachi Situation

BK0201114696 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1100 GMT 2 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The interior minister, retired Major General Nasirullah Khan Babar, has said the government wanted to resolve the Karachi problem through political means, but those challenging the state's authority through terrorist activities would be dealt with effectively. He was winding up a debate in the Senate on the Karachi situation in the context of yesterday's killings. He said there were minimum number of killings during December. He said he had given 31 December as a date for the improvement of the situation, but the terrorists wanted to give the impression by indulging in fresh violence that they still have the capacity to indulge in terrorist activities. The interior minister made it clear that there have been no custodial or extrajudicial killings and appropriate inquiries of commissions were set up when such reports were received.

During the discussion, the law minister, Mr. N.D. Khan, said he was ready to resume talks with the Altaf Group even tomorrow. He reminded that during the last round of talks Mr. Ajmal Dehlvi had himself admitted progress on five points, but thereafter he received a letter raising nonissues. He hoped Mr. Dehlvi would come back from London with positive proposals.

The Senate offered fateha [prayers] for the victims who had been killed in Karachi yesterday at the hands of terrorists. The fateha was offered at a point of order raised by Syed Ishtiyaq Azhar. Special prayers were also offered for the eternal peace of the departed souls and fortitude to the members of the bereaved families.

Daily Reports Continued Violence in Karachi

BK0201082596 Islamabad THE NATION in English 2 Jan 96 p 2

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Karachi — As many as 18 people were killed and over half a dozen others wounded in continuing violence and terrorism which intensified in the mega city on Monday — first day of the new year. The victims also included a Rangers Captain, an Army Captain, a Rangers Subedar, two personnel of police and Janbaz Force and five members of a family.

Ironically these killings took place at a time when President Farooq Leghari was in the City and holding a high-level meeting on law and order situation.

The worst incident of terrorism was reported from Zaman Town in District East in which five members

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of a family were brutally murdered. Police said that a group of eight unidentified armed men broke into House No. L-731 at Section 48-B in Korangi early Monday morning. They caught hold of all the inmates, separated the females, tied their hands and legs and locked them in a room. Later, they took all the five male members to another room, lined them up with the wall and sprayed them with volleys of shots with automatic weapons, killing four of them and seriously injuring the fifth. He was later rushed to Jinnah Hospital where he also succumbed to his injuries. Police identified the deceased as milkseller Din Muhammad 65, and his sons Muhammad Iqbal 45, Muhammad Asghar, 30, Muhammad Akbar, 26 and Naseer, 15. The motive behind these ghastly murders could not be known but police said that they might have been killed on suspicion of being police informers.

In another incident police recovered bullet-riddled bodies of four persons from a Suzuki pick-up [CH-8420] which had been abandoned behind Nairang Market in Liaquatabad area. The bodies were packed into gunny bags. Edhi Trust volunteers removed them to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital Police identified the deceased as Rangers Captain, Waseem Aftab, Army Captain Faisal Bin Hussain, Constable Janbaz Force Iftekharuddin and Police Constable Muhammad Sayeed Khan.

Police said that the victims had been kidnapped from different places and were later tortured and killed.

Police found body of another Rangers Subedar Dost Muhammad which was lying in a playground in Saudabad (Malir). The body bore marks of torture and bullet wounds. It was taken to Combined Military Hospital, Malir.

Some unidentified persons shotdead Mohammad Yaseen, 30 and Hasan Khalid, 24 in the jurisdiction of Pirabad Police Station. Police brought the bodies to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital. Another young man Dost Mohammad also received stray bullets in the same locality and was rushed to hospital where doctors were struggling to save his life.

Police found body of one Aleemuddin, 30, lying in an abandoned Suzuki pick-up [CG-26 12] in Sharifabad aera. The victim was tortured and shot dead.

Some unidentified armed men attacked and killed one Farhan Bari, 18 at Paposh Nagar in Nazimabad while in another incident another young man Suleman was gunned down in Azizabad area.

Rizwan, 15, Ruqayya; 25 and two-and-a-half year-old Hinan were also brought to hospital with gunshot wounds from Landhi, Pak Colony and Korangi. Police said they were injured in snipers firing.

Tension prevailed in Liaquatabad, Korangi, Malir and Nazimabad as police and Rangers intensified patrolling.

Sri Lanka

President Discusses Peace Talks, Reforms

BK0101100896 Colombo SUNDAY OBSERVER in English 31 Dec 95

[Interview with President Chandrika Kumaratunga by correspondent Gunasekara; place and date not given—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Question: You have promised that the Government will present its devolution proposals in legal form early in the new year. Will the final set of proposals see any changes in the "package" after the public debate in the past few months?

Answer: Not changes in the core substance. We hope to have the proposals before the Select Committee very shortly. We presented the package of proposals for public debate and, in the light of that debate, we are making some amendments. But this will not dilute the essence of the political reform we are proposing. For example, there was some confusion among some circles and criticism about the provisions for foreign aid. This may have been due to a lack of clarity in the wording of the proposals. These provisions will be more clearly set out in the forthcoming legal draft. In some instances, what the critics said about the provisions were what was originally intended but not expressed clearly in the wording. So these will be clarified. And there are a few other amendments.

Q: In terms of the unit of devolution, which you have not elaborated on in the proposals, will the final legal draft see a new definition of the provinces, or "regions" as you call them? That is, will there be a definition of the territorial extent of the various regions?

A: The re-demarcation of the boundaries of regions we are leaving for the Select Committee to decide. We have narrowed the issue down to several options for the Committee to discuss and finalise.

Q: What is likely to be the basis for the new demarcation of regions? What are the principles according to which you think it should be done?

A: We have indicated the basic unit in our original document—that is, the regional council—Its powers and authority have been fairly well set out in the proposals and those will not be changed in any substantial form. I think the only difficult issue is the demarcation of the present North and East— whether it will continue to be a single unit, or whether new boundaries will be

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demarcated while keeping the two provinces, or whether some bits of territory would be carved out or added on. These are the three basic issues in this regard which will have to be finalised.

Q: On what grounds will you do that kind of adjustment? For example, will it be on the basis of populations and ethnic compositions?

A: Certainly that will also be taken into account but, that will not be the only factor. We will also have to look at the feasibility of administering the new units. The interests of the ethnic communities living in those areas will naturally be catered to.

Reform

Q: How strong do you say is the move for a separate Muslim region or sub-region. Is that a likely component of the new structure?

A: In this matter, I would not put it in the way you do. On the one side, the Sinhala extremists claim that if there is a merger of the two provinces, then, given the background of Tamil militancy in the past few decades, that will be a springboard for a separate State. On the other hand, Tamil extremists talk of a Tamil "homeland". I think both views are wrong. If we start purely on this basis, then the Tamils resident in the South will have no place in a hypothetical Sinhala "homeland".

Next, we will have to carve out "homelands" for Muslims on the West coast where the first Muslim migrants settled! What is at stake are not "homelands" or ethnic areas. It is the issue of the rights of the ethnic minorities. There must be political structures that would ensure the physical security, the economic and social rights and as a whole, the right to live freely as equal citizens in this country. For that you do not need to physically demarcate homelands.

I personally feel that this is counter-productive. The more you barricade people into well defined and limited areas, the more you stabilise the ethnic divides. Of course, in every country, where there are distinct ethnic communities and where conflicts have arisen, some kind of gauge is required for those communities in conflict to feel that some day there will be a political entity which would ensure their identity and their rights. In Sri Lanka such a conflict has arisen, unfortunately, and it was allowed to worsen, up to the point of one of the communities believing that they could not any more live as equal citizens with the majority, and that they had no option but to strive for a separate country.

All the governments and the majority Sinhala community as well as the leaders of the Sinhalese and Tamils are responsible for this. Once it has reached this point, even though I maintain that it is not necessary to talk of "homelands", it is necessary to have political units within the united country to ensure that the Tamil community will have the confidence they do not have at the moment in the Central Government and the majority community. This does not mean that that political arrangement should be decided on according to the homeland concept.

Q: We are now looking at a future where there will be newly demarcated regions. That seems to be the way the reform process is going. Would you say that the redemarcation is precisely to ensure that the interests of all the respective communities in their various localities will be looked after?

A: You cannot ensure that in a perfect sense. But there will have to be reform at least to solve the major issue of the problems of the Tamil people in such a way that the Muslims and Sinhalese in those areas will not suffer.

Not a "conquest"

Q: How will you manage the reform process if the UNP [United National Party] fails to support the proposals at the Select Committee stage?

A: If we do not get their support, we will then have to see what can be done to achieve a settlement of this problem. These are political problems for which it is possible to find solutions. We will strive to find the largest concensus.

The main point is that the Tamil people must have a political unit where they have some kind of self-government, where they can be sure that their rights will be ensured in case those rights are not ensured, at least, in this part of the world.

We want to show the Tamils our bona fides: that we are not just trying to crush them and force them to be under an united, sovereign country and have nothing else. We want to show that we are giving them as much as we can in the form of a distinct political and administrative unit.

Q: The re-imposition of Governmental control of Jaffna has been interpreted by much of the mass media in the South as a kind of "conquest". On the other hand, the Tamils worry that this might mean a hardening of Sinhala attitudes against devolution. Will a continued military campaign against the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] take the country into a situation of even greater ethnic division?

A: I must say that for the Government, it was not a "conquest". It is unfortunate that the LTTE has pushed

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us to this point. We would have preferred that, at the time the ceasefire existed, the LTTE had continued to discuss devolution and the political solution. Then it would not have been necessary for the army to go in there at all. What I, personally, was hoping was that we could transform, even though that would have been very difficult (I still believe that nothing is impossible if one has the political will), the military-terroristic nature of the LTTE through a political solution into at least a quasi-democratic system, from where we could have gone on to properly democratic institutions a little later. We had even gone to the extent of discussing with the various Tamil political groups as well and they had agreed to that kind of in-between arrangement where the LTTE itself would have taken the leadership in the North that is, if the people there so wished it.

Initiative

Q: Is there a danger that a continued military campaign might convince the Sinhalese, on one side, that devolution is not necessary?

A: We still hope that with our legislative initiative on the devolution proposals, the Tamil people will be able to persuade their representatives, including the LTTE, to come to some kind of political negotiation so that we could stop the military campaign as soon as possible. Even if we have to continue with the military campaign, we will still push ahead with devolution. The two track approach formulated by the Government has not changed in any way.

The next year will be absolutely critical for the history of our country, even more so than the last year. All of us are called to do a very deep soul-searching. The leaders of our society, including the religious leaders and political leaders, as well as everybody else, will have to now decide whether they are going to continue with their various stances, which have been very harmful, at times, to the country's progress, merely for the sake of holding onto those stances.

Some people may even feel that their role as leaders in their various spheres would be in question if they do not carry on with the same kind of demagogy. But I think we have to be honest enough and committed enough to even risk losing our own personal spheres of influence for the sake of the country at this point.

The People's Alliance has taken that risk. And we are risking not just our political position and future but also our very lives! I have to live with the risk that I could go up in flames or be shot at, at any moment! So we don't see why other leaders, both political and religious, can't risk their personal status for the sake of the country.

We took a very calculated risk in political terms in the last three years in going to the people and telling them things which no other Sinhala leader did. Then we were not sure whether the people would follow us, but we did it because it had to be done. Someone had to take the risk.

That calculation has proven correct—the people did follow us. We haven't yet called the bluff of a lot of so-called leaders but I think now either we, or the people, will have to call them to account if we are to make this a success, because we have gone too far now to turn back, politically. I think the people have come forward with us on this road, and we cannot abandon the people or the path we have chosen because it has proven to be successful. If it proves to be otherwise, we are ready to be flexible then.

Negotiations

Q: If, despite the rehabilitation efforts in Jaffna, the displaced population does not come back, what will you do to bring the people back?

A: There are already some 10,000 people living in the Valikamam division. We intend to enable the rest of the population to join them as soon as possible. When the people see our efforts to care for them, they will come.

Q: But if the LTTE continues to forcibly keep the refugees in the uncleared areas?

A: There is a limit as to how long the LTTE will be able to forcibly retain the people. Even if, at most, the LTTE has 10,000 cadres (and we know they do not have so many armed and fit cadres), that is not enough to keep the 200,000 or more people trapped in the uncleared areas.

Q: Will you pursue the military campaign to recover the areas now held by LTTE?

A: The uncleared areas can be regained either militarily or politically. A military effort means more destruction, death and injury to people, immense social and economic damage. If the LTTE comes for political negotiations and power is devolved to these areas, then there will be no further necessity for the military effort. We have always said that we want to avoid the destructive war, which harms the whole country, but it is up to the LTTE to come for negotiations. However, if they carry out attacks, we will not hesitate to defend the people and the country.

Q: How ready are you to obtain the help of the Tamil parties in the newly cleared areas in order to bring the people back?

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A: We will welcome the participation of the Tamil parties and former militant groups. We expect them to come forward at this time to work with the people in the field to bring them back to their homes. The people are suffering in the North and their leaders must come forward instead of just sitting in Colombo. It is time the Tamil politicians demonstrate their ability to mobilise their constituency for peace and a political solution. We are taking political and personal risks. So must the Tamil leaders. Some of the former militant groups have shown readiness to do work in Jaffna and other newly cleared areas.

Corruption

Q: In recent months, a number of trade unions have begun agitating against the privatisation program. Will 1996 see more privatisation or will PERC [expansion unknown] be limited to only educational advertisements?

A: We are in constant dialogue with the unions, unlike the previous government. It was the way in which privatisation was down by the UNP that the whole process became so suspect. This was the biggest mess handed down to us by the UNP. We intend going ahead and we are confident that we can reassure the unions. The people are realising that the State sector alone lacks the skills and resources including capital, necessary for development. Privatisation, correctly done, will benefit the workers and the people as a whole. Telecom will be privatised in a limited way. We will sell only 25 per cent to the private sector. The State banks will not be privatised.

Q: What about the estate sector? Will you actually sell the estates or will you continue the management contracts?

A: That is a very worrying sector. We will not sell the estates. We propose to sell the management contracts for a period of 50 years.

Q: Will the workers living on the estates get to own their homes?

A: Yes. That is already under way. That will be part of the understanding in giving management contracts. We have begun self-help schemes. We want to end the line-room culture as fast as possible and integrate the estate community with the rest of the country. There will be tripar'ite agreements between the managements, unions and government. The excess labour on the estates will be absorbed by the other sectors of the economy.

Q: There are continuing complaints of corruption in high places, especially the irregularities in the tender procedure. What is your response?

A: It is true that there have been some instances. In some cases, I have personally intervened, when necessary. In other cases, the relevant Ministers have taken action. The tender procedure so frequently flouted during the UNP regime, is actually an old-fashioned one. We are now drawing up a new set of procedures for tenders and for other forms of project implementation.

Q: There is speculation that the Government intends to dissolve the Sabaragamuwa and North Central Provincial Councils. Is this correct?

A: I have reports that there is large scale corruption in these administrations. We advised the Chief Ministers to act. Because they have failed to take action, we have already taken steps to deal with the corruption issue. If necessary we are ready to dissolve the Councils.

Firm action

Q: There is an argument that if the Government intervenes in this way, this could undermine the confidence of the Tamil community of a future devolution free of central government interference...

A: The Government has real faith in devolution. It is because of the mess in these provincial administration that we have to act in order to restore the faith of the people in the system of devolved administration.

Q: There are continuing complaints of political thuggery by Government politicians especially in areas north of Colombo. How are you dealing with this?

A: There have been some incidents in a few areas. I am inquiring into this. If we think any injustice has been done, we will take firm action—whether the individuals concerned are Ministers, deputy ministers or MPs.

Tamil Steps Up Attacks Amid Peace Talks Offer

BK3112090195 Hong Kong AFP in English 0746 GMT 31 Dec 95

[Report by Amal Jayasinghe]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] COLOMBO, Dec 31 (AFP) — Tamil guerrillas raided an army island base Sunday [31 December], killing four soldiers and losing three of their own men as Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga renewed an offer of peace talks, officials said.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out the pre-dawn raid on the Buffalo Island army detachment in the eastern district of Batticaloa, triggering a heavy fire fight, official sources said.

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"The Tigers managed to kill four sentries and wound another three soldiers. At least three Tigers were killed in the counter-offensive and their bodies were recovered by the army," an official said.

An LTTE guerrilla strapped with explosives had set himself off against an army truck in the same district but failed to kill any soldiers in a Kamikaze-style attack less than a day earlier.

The stepped-up attacks came as President Kumaratunga in remarks published Sunday said that the government will have no alternative but to militarily crush the LTTE if the rebels do not enter peace talks.

"It is up to the LTTE to come for negotiations," Kumaratunga said in an interview with the state-run Sunday Observer. "However, if they carry out attacks, we will not hesitate to defend the people and the country."

Kumaratunga announced last month that the LTTE should make a "substantial surrender of arms" if they are to resume talks with the government in a bid to end the protracted conflict which has claimed over 50,000 lives since 1972.

For their part, the LTTE maintains that the army should withdraw from the northern town of Jaffna which was captured from the rebels earlier this month after nearly 50 days of fighting. Some 500 soldiers and nearly 2,000 rebels died in the battle.

LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran said in a message to coincide with his birthday last month that the army should pull out from all areas wrested from his control and doors to peace will remain "firmly shut" until then.

The military says it will not budge from Jaffna, the capital of a de facto state the LTTE had run in the northern peninsula for nearly five years before the army stormed in with its biggest ground offensive launched on October 17.

President Kumaratunga said areas still under rebel control in the island's north would be taken either militarily or politically.

"A military effort means more destruction, death and injury to people, immense social and economic damage," Kumaratunga said. "We have always said that we want to avoid this destructive war."

Thousands of Tamil civilians who fled the fighting in Jaffna are sheltering in areas still dominated by the Tigers and the LTTE has said those who return to army-controlled areas will be treated as "traitors.

The latest round of fighting began when the LTTE pulled out of a 100-day truce ending nearly six months of talks with Kumaratunga's government, which came to power in August 1994.

Since then, the LTTE has used its deadly force of suicide bombers to cause considerable damage to the security forces and civilian targets in a bid to destabilise the government.

LTTE Suicide Bomber Injures 2, 1 Critically

BK3012103995 Colombo LANKAPUVATH in English 0917 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, 30 Dec (LANKAPUVATH) — A LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] suicide bomber exploded himself near a security forces vehicle in eastern Sri Lanka Saturday, injuring an officer and a civilian bystander.

A press release issued by the Operational Headquarters of the Defence Ministry said the officer was slightly wounded while the civilian was in a critical condition due to the explosion which occurred around 0930 hours near the Kallady Bridge in Batticaloa.

Body parts of the terrorist bomber was strewn around the place of the incident while the vehicle was extensively damaged.

LTTE Military Wing Leader in Batticaloa Killed

BK3012102295 Colombo LANKAPUVATH in English 0915 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, 30 Dec (LANKAPUVATH) — A LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] military wing leader has been killed by the security forces in eastern Sri Lanka. Senior military sources told LANKAPUVATH that police special task force commandos Friday ambushed and killed a group of terrorists, which included Kannan, the LTTE military wing leader for Kokkadicholai, in the Batticaloa District.

In another incident on the same day, troops acting on information given by the public, ambushed and killed three of a group of about 20 terrorists at Yakawewa, which is located between Anuradhapura and Weli Oya in the Northcentral Province.

They had also recovered weapons and a radio transmission set, the sources said.

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LTTE Reportedly Blocking Tamils From Returning Home

BK3012101695 Colombo LANKAPUVATH in English 0910 GMT 30 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, 30 Dec (LANKAPUVATH) — A senior Jaffna citizen who is now in Colombo told LANKAPUVATH Saturday that the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] is very unpopular with the people of Jaffna and that if there was a free vote in an election, the LTTE would receive a crushing defeat.

He said that his family had been one of the last to leave the Jaffna city and like thousands of others had not wanted to leave the northern capital but had been forced out of their homes at the point of a barrel of a gun by the LTTE who were now using them as human shields in Thenmarachchi, Vadamarachchi and Kilinochchi.

The Jaffna citizen who did not want his name revealed as he feared the LTTE would kill him for expressing his views, said that the rest of his family had been compulsorily moved along with others to LTTE-controlled areas in the north.

All of us want to go back to our homes in Jaffna. But the LTTE is not allowing us, is threatening to kill us if we try to go back. We do not have any guns. It is the LTTE that has the guns, so we have to undergo terrible hardship and continue to be ruled by the tyrant terrorist organisation, he said.

He said that at the time the citizens of Jaffna were forcibly evacuated by the LTTE, he was in Colombo while his wife and children had to move out and were now living as refugees.

He claimed that the LTTE, in addition to using the Jaffna citizens as human shields in areas still held by them, were also using them as insurance for food and other essentials supplied by the Sri Lankan Government.

The bulk of these supplies were taken by the LTTE while the refugees had to be satisfied with a very meagre portion of the food, kerosene and other essentials meant for them, but which were being hijacked by the LTTE.

He said the refugees were living in fright of the LTTE who were guarding them round-the-clock.

Indian Probe Reportedly Links Arms Drop to LTTE

BK3012100495 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 30 Dec 95

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] THE probe by the Indian Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) about the clandestine Puralia arms-drop by the Russian made AN-26 aircraft on December 17 has elicited vital information linking the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] to the incident, our New Delhi special correspondent Upali Rupasinghe reported yesterday.

The CIB officials have studied certain messages monitored by security intelligence and are waiting to find out whether the information gathered from the intercepts dovetail with the report on the aircraft's "technical halt" at the Madras airport, an official has told our correspondent.

"The weapons found paradropped in the Puralia district are the same types used by the LTTE," the official had said.

India's national press has been carrying several news stories since the incident, focusing attention on the LTTE's possible connection to the arms-drop and the aircraft's unscheduled landing at the Madras airport. The prestigious national daily, The Statesman , for instance, last Tuesday carried a news story headlined "Plane landed in Madras to deliver arms to LTTE".

Our correspondent said The Telegraph lent support to the The Statesman's story yesterday with a report of its own titled "Were the arms for the LTTE?" This story had said that the major part of the Puralia arms-drop investigation is now following a trail leading to the LTTE.

The Hindu said in its front page lead on Wednesday that the AN-26 crew members had revealed that half of the lethal weapons cargo it carried was still lying near Karachi in Pakistan.

The crew including five Latvians and one British national told their interrogators that the weapons were to be received by a person code-named Randy.

Minister of State for Home, Sibte Razi has told PTI that a very good breakthrough had been achieved in the investigations into the paradropping of arms.

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